

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE DISTRICT OF MARYLAND
BALTIMORE DIVISION

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

Plaintiff,

vs.

MICHAEL GEORGE VERZALENO, JR.,

Defendant.

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) Docket Number
) 1:23-00323-PX-1
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TRANSCRIPT OF SENTENCING HEARING
BEFORE THE HONORABLE PAULA XINIS
UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT JUDGE
MONDAY, MARCH 24, 2025, AT 11:00 A.M.

APPEARANCES:

On Behalf of the Plaintiff:

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(Appearances continued:)

COMPUTER-AIDED TRANSCRIPTION OF STENOTYPED NOTES

1 On Behalf of the Defendant:

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13 ALSO PRESENT: Michael G. Verzaleno, Jr., Defendant
14 Paige Cameron, Probation
15 Rachel Solomon, IRS
16 Dan Rzepecki, FBI
17 Peter Flack, FBI
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P R O C E E D I N G S

(Court called to order.)

DEPUTY CLERK: All rise. The United States District Court for the District of Maryland is now in session. The Honorable Paula Xinis presiding.

THE COURT: Good morning, everyone.

(ALL COUNSEL: Good morning, Your Honor.)

THE COURT: You all can have a seat.

Will the government call the case.

MR. WENNER: The government calls the United States of America v. Michael G. Verzaleno, Jr., Criminal Case Number PX-23-323.

Good morning, Your Honor, Joseph Wenner, AUSA, on behalf of the United States. I'm joined at counsels' table by Tim Hagan, fellow AUSA; Rachel Solomon, Special Agent from IRS CI; Dan Rzepecki, Special Agent from FBI; Peter Flack, forensic accounting of FBI.

For the record, Your Honor, I would also like to point out that in the first row behind me, Mr. Richard Pisano, President of Citrus and Allied, the victim in this case, is present here as well.

THE COURT: Okay. Great. Thank you.

MR. VARTAN: Good morning, Your Honor. Lee Vartan on behalf of Michael Verzaleno, Jr., who is standing to my left. And I'm joined at counsel table by ...

1 **MR. VARGHESE:** George Varghese, Your Honor, on behalf
2 of Mr. Verzaleno, Jr., Wilmer Hale.

3 **MS. WERNICK:** And Melissa Wernick also on behalf of
4 Mr. Verzaleno, Jr.

5 **THE COURT:** Okay. You all can have a seat. Thank
6 you.

7 And to all the family and friends who are here today, I
8 very much appreciate your presence. It speaks volumes. I've
9 read every single one of the letters. So if you have written
10 to the Court, you have certainly been heard, and that includes
11 Citrus and Allied.

12 I do have one procedural question before we start with
13 Mr. Verzaleno, Jr., and that is, is Mr. Verzaleno, Sr., and
14 Ms. Carrano and their counsel in the courtroom as well?

15 (ALL COUNSEL: Yes, Your Honor.)

16 **THE COURT:** Okay. Thank you. What I would suggest
17 is at the appropriate time, I understand that the
18 representative from Citrus and Allied may want to be heard,
19 that it -- we only have him do this once, given that all
20 defendants and their counsel are present.

21 Any issue with that?

22 **MR. WENNER:** No, Your Honor. We were going to
23 suggest the same thing.

24 **THE COURT:** Great. Okay. All right. Thank you.

25 Okay. Mr. Verzaleno, Jr., today is your sentencing, and

1 my first question for you is, have you had enough time to
2 review with your counsel the presentence report that was
3 prepared in this case?

4 **THE DEFENDANT:** Yes, I have, Your Honor.

5 **THE COURT:** If I place you on supervision, there are
6 standard and mandatory conditions of supervision which are
7 the -- the mandatory ones are imposed in every case, the
8 standard ones are imposed in almost every case in this
9 district.

10 Have you reviewed those standard and mandatory conditions?

11 **THE DEFENDANT:** Yes; yes, we did, Your Honor.

12 **THE COURT:** Yeah, they are in the presentence report.

13 **DEPUTY CLERK:** Yes.

14 **THE COURT:** Do you understand them?

15 **THE DEFENDANT:** I do, yes, Your Honor.

16 **THE COURT:** And do you agree to abide by them?

17 **THE DEFENDANT:** Yes, I do.

18 **THE COURT:** Mr. Vartan, do you have any objections to
19 any of the standard or mandatory conditions?

20 **MR. VARTAN:** No, Your Honor.

21 **THE COURT:** Okay. All right. Any objections to the
22 presentence report that have not already been resolved?

23 **MR. VARTAN:** No, Your Honor. We've stated our
24 guidelines objection, but I believe the government and the
25 defense are on the same page, that the applicable guidelines

1 offense level is 16 and not 18. But we laid all of that out in
2 our letter to Probation.

3 **THE COURT:** Okay. All right. Government, same
4 question for you.

5 **MR. WENNER:** No additional objections, Your Honor.
6 We agree with the defense counsel that we are abiding by the
7 plea agreement which has the additional downward variance to
8 make the offense level a 16.

9 **THE COURT:** So just so everyone here is clear as to
10 how I see this working, there are the guidelines and the
11 guidelines adjustments. There are departures, which neither
12 side are seeking. And then there are variances which you all
13 stipulate, I should -- vary at least equivalent to two levels,
14 although I am free to do what I believe is best, based on the
15 evidence.

16 Given that, I don't see this as a dispute with Probation.
17 Probation has done its job in calculating the guidelines based
18 on the evidence presented. But I understand the agreement, and
19 I'm sure we'll talk more about it as we get into sentencing.

20 Okay. So with that -- yes, Mr. Vartan?

21 **MR. VARTAN:** No. I was going to say I understood,
22 Judge.

23 **THE COURT:** Okay. With that, I will adopt the
24 presentence report in total.

25 Very well done as always, from your office, and from you,

1 Ms. Cameron. And so I won't make any changes to it. And I
2 understand the defense's -- or the government's -- or the
3 parties' position.

4 Okay. Again, before I hear from you all as to the
5 sufficient but not greater than necessary sentence, I want to
6 do two things, one is confirm what is happening with
7 restitution.

8 I do note that the defendants agreed with the government
9 as to the proper restitution amount owed to Citrus and Allied,
10 and had made that restitution payment at the time of the guilty
11 plea for each defendant.

12 Am I right about that?

13 **MR. VARTAN:** That's correct, with one caveat, which
14 we have noted in the sentencing materials. There was an
15 insurance payment that Citrus and Allied received in the amount
16 of a million dollars. I don't think that factually that's
17 disputed in any way. The issue is how that would be credited,
18 if at all, against the three-and-a-half-million dollars.

19 **THE COURT:** I mean, unless there is some -- this is
20 how I see the restitution amount. It's agreed upon. You can
21 do that. And then it -- it relieves me of the evidentiary task
22 of deciding what amount is attributable to your client, to the
23 other defendants from the Verzaleno/Kearny drum aspect of this
24 case.

25 Are you asking me to credit for an insurance payment that

1 I -- according to the government, if I heard it right, was paid
2 for other -- not related to Kearny's wrongdoing, but part of
3 the larger drum conspiracy?

4 **MR. VARTAN:** So Judge, we don't have discovery on
5 that million-dollar insurance payment, so I'm not sure how the
6 claim was made or when it was paid. But we certainly
7 understand, and the government can correct me if this is wrong,
8 that from the government's perspective, this was a unitary
9 conspiracy on Citrus and Allied, the total value of which was
10 roughly \$30 million.

11 **THE COURT:** Right.

12 **MR. VARTAN:** Only three and a half of which is
13 attributable to us.

14 My understanding is the insurance payment, or the
15 insurance payment had to do with the sum total of the
16 conspiracy.

17 **THE COURT:** Right.

18 **MR. VARTAN:** And, therefore, there should be some
19 credit, at least from our perspective, toward our
20 three-and-a-half-million payment, even if that's just a
21 percentage-wise credit.

22 **THE COURT:** I'm not sure -- do you have any law for
23 me on that? Because I'm not a hundred percent sure that an
24 insurance payment on -- especially this large of a sum entitles
25 anyone to credit -- and I'm not even sure what you're proposing

1 to quantify it as. And given that this was an agreed upon
2 resolution, I'm not sure -- anyway, go ahead. Tell me what
3 you --

4 **MR. VARTAN:** I'm not going to fight about certainly
5 the overall number. All I'm saying is that certainly the
6 victim can't receive more than the loss.

7 And so we've paid our amount in full. I'm not sure where
8 the other victims -- where the other co-conspirators in all of
9 this stand. But, certainly, we believe that a credit would be
10 due to us, even, again, if it's a -- the percentage of our
11 involvement relative to the 30 million.

12 **THE COURT:** Well, what's your -- what's your proposal
13 in terms of credit? I mean --

14 **MR. VARTAN:** Well, I think it would be --

15 **THE COURT:** Like, what do I do with this?

16 **MR. VARTAN:** I can do the math, but it would
17 basically be if there's a million-dollar insurance payment
18 against a loss of \$30 million, three and a half divided by 30
19 times a million dollars I think would be the appropriate
20 credit.

21 But, again, we don't have discovery around the insurance
22 payment. We just know that it happened.

23 **THE COURT:** All right. Well, let me ask the
24 government what its position is in this respect.

25 Mr. Wenner?

1 **MR. WENNER:** Thank you, Your Honor.

2 Your Honor, in the plea agreement, Paragraph 11 --

3 **THE COURT:** Yep.

4 **MR. WENNER:** -- it says clearly the defendant agrees
5 to pay \$3.5 million of the restitution on the arraignment date.
6 There's no allowance for a credit.

7 This was something that was brought up in plea
8 negotiations, and the government relayed the same thing that it
9 did on Note 1, Page -- pardon me, Your Honor -- Note 1, Page 8,
10 of the government's sentencing memorandum, that the relevant
11 insurance payment was made for a different defendant, although
12 part of the larger fraud, the defrauded C and A, for a
13 different defendant before these defendants were even indicted.

14 And, Your Honor, the plea agreement we think, at the end
15 of the day, is what controls. And in that plea agreement, the
16 defendant agreed to pay \$3.5 million. And from the
17 government's perspective, that should be the end of this
18 discussion about what the proper restitution is.

19 **MR. VARTAN:** And, Your Honor, the only thing, if I
20 may, that I would add to that, in the plea agreement, because
21 this was discussed with the government at the time, it does say
22 the restitution amount shall take into account any insurance
23 claim paid to the victim for the loss directly related to the
24 defendant's conduct in this case.

25 So this -- this was always contemplated. I certainly

1 don't want to make an issue of this, Judge.

2 **THE COURT:** Yeah, it seems to me -- I mean, one of
3 the questions I was going to ask the government, let me just
4 get it out there now, is has -- other than the million-dollar
5 insurance payment and the payment that the Verzalenos have made
6 in this case, has the victim received any other restitution or
7 reimbursement?

8 **MR. WENNER:** With the Court's indulgence, I'll
9 confirm.

10 **THE COURT:** Okay. Thank you.

11 **UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER ON TELEPHONE:** Judge? Hello?
12 Hello? Nobody is answering me. Hello?

13 **MR. WENNER:** Thank you. We --

14 **THE COURT:** Yes?

15 **MR. WENNER:** Sorry, Your Honor.

16 **THE COURT:** Go ahead.

17 **DEPUTY CLERK:** Your Honor?

18 (Discussion between the Deputy Clerk and the Judge.)

19 **DEPUTY CLERK:** Good afternoon. We have somebody who
20 is dialing into the proceeding. We have you in the hearing.
21 If you could please mute your phone so no one in the courtroom
22 can hear your end of the conversation. Thank you.

23 **MR. WENNER:** Thank you for the Court's indulgence.

24 **THE COURT:** Yes. Go ahead.

25 **MR. WENNER:** Your Honor, several defendants have made

1 around several hundred thousand dollars of restitution
2 payments. The total amount remains under \$1 million. C and A
3 continues to be pursuing those funds. And the rest of the
4 restitution, as in order with the other defendants, remains
5 outstanding.

6 And, Your Honor, I would just again point Your Honor to
7 Page 5 of Citrus and Allied's victim impact statement where
8 they, in fact, cite case law explaining the point that the
9 victims' -- and I'm quoting the middle of the paragraph on Page
10 5, Fourth Circuit has held that the victims' receipt of
11 insurance proceeds does not reduce a defendant's restitution
12 obligation. At best, any offset to the defendant's restitution
13 obligation should only be for a pro rata share of the loss of
14 the total of all related funds.

15 But the Court has no obligation to reduce the restitution
16 order at all. And, I believe, Your Honor, the upshot of that
17 is the payment should be made for the 3.5 million, and then if
18 there's an insurance claim, the division of those proceeds,
19 then can be calculated out after that. But it doesn't require
20 that Your Honor reduce the amounts that the Verzalenos are
21 required to pay today.

22 **THE COURT:** So let me ask you a question about this.
23 I've stepped into this case sort of in the middle. I've got --
24 if I understand it right, there's at least one or two
25 sentencings before Judge Chasanow which are left. There is --

1 there was one before Judge Griggsby. They are all part of the
2 total loss to C and A.

3 So far, the sentencings have ordered restitution. Have
4 they ordered them joint and several with -- well, will you go
5 back in those other cases, if I order them joint and several,
6 for the Verzalenos and Ms. Carrano, will you go back and make
7 sure that the restitution is joint and several in these other
8 cases or are you proposing some other mechanism? And the
9 reason why I ask is because the payment of insurance may matter
10 in that respect. If it's joint and several, then the
11 3.5 million is -- it will be -- satisfy the Verzalenos today.
12 It will satisfy their piece of this.

13 But just sort of trying to think through this, it won't
14 matter, for purposes of a pro rata credit, if the total is
15 joint and severally owned -- owed by others. In other words,
16 until you hit the 29 million, or whatever the total -- the
17 total loss to the victim is, the million-dollar payment, I
18 don't think matters, at least I'm not going to say today that
19 I'm giving the Verzalenos a credit.

20 Especially -- I mean, it's a tough argument to make,
21 because I imagine in a moment, you're going to tell me this is
22 a sort of mitigation as well, but yet you want some financial
23 credit for this. So that's why I'm really trying to get to
24 sort of what's the bottom line on this given that this is a
25 complicated -- there's a pie of 29 million. There's an

1 agreed-upon resolution for the three individuals before me;
2 that was 3.5 million. You both waved your hands and what
3 restitution means or insurance means or doesn't mean; clearly
4 doesn't satisfy the total loss to the victim.

5 So what do you propose I practically do?

6 **MR. VARTAN:** I don't think, Judge, there's anything
7 practically to do today other than I'm flagging the issue,
8 because other sentencings have not happened until the
9 government --

10 **THE COURT:** Well, Mr. Uricoli was sentenced;
11 Mr. Kleinman was sentenced; Mr. DiNoto will be sentenced,
12 right?

13 **MR. VARTAN:** Right.

14 **THE COURT:** I mean, so there's -- I consider those to
15 be related in this case.

16 **MR. VARTAN:** As do we.

17 **THE COURT:** Okay.

18 **MR. VARTAN:** But there's also a sentencing for
19 Mr. Ferncola that I believe is upcoming before Judge Chasanow.
20 So the sum total of the defendants have not yet been sentenced.

21 And maybe the best thing to do would be for the government
22 and we to have a conversation about whether an offset is
23 applicable.

24 But we're not looking to walk away from the
25 three-and-a-half-million-dollar restitution figure.

1 **THE COURT:** Okay.

2 **MR. VARTAN:** And that was made clear, obviously, at
3 the time of the plea hearing, because we wanted to, and the
4 government knows this, be very clear with the government and
5 the Court that we were accepting full responsibility, even
6 before today, and pay that into the court at that time a number
7 of months ago.

8 **THE COURT:** Right. Okay. So what I'm hearing you
9 say, then, Mr. Vartan, is that there isn't an issue that's ripe
10 for me to decide.

11 **MR. VARTAN:** I think that's accurate.

12 **THE COURT:** And will you all take your chances that
13 after I sentence and I impose the \$3.5 million restitution
14 payable immediately today, and the money is forwarded to Citrus
15 and Allied, that I -- you know, I don't know how the
16 restitution statute will bear out with respect to this pro rata
17 credit, but all I know is, you flagged the issue for me, but
18 you're not asking me to give you any relief today on it.

19 Am I right about that?

20 **MR. VARTAN:** I think that's correct.

21 **THE COURT:** Okay. All right. And I appreciate that,
22 and I guess we'll come to that bridge, if we ever come to that
23 bridge.

24 But with respect to the money that was deposited into the
25 Court's registry today, I will, as part of Mr. Verzaleno, Jr.,

1 and Senior's judgment, order the restitution.

2 I was a little bit unclear as to Ms. Carrano. Will I also
3 be ordering the restitution amount for her? I mean, it's been
4 fully satisfied. I just want to make sure under the MVRA, I'm
5 doing what I'm supposed to do as to each of the defendants.

6 **MR. VARTAN:** If you're asking me, Judge --

7 **THE COURT:** I know, you're not on the hook for this
8 answer. Okay. I just want to make sure before I actually --

9 **MR. VARTAN:** Understood.

10 **THE COURT:** -- ink it that I've asked this question
11 of the government.

12 **MR. WENNER:** I thought I would give him a shot while
13 I turned the pages.

14 **THE COURT:** Okay.

15 **MR. WENNER:** Your Honor, my understanding of how
16 restitution was agreed upon in this case was that the
17 defendants in this particular case, the three defendants,
18 agreed to the \$3.5 million joint and several, so the
19 restitution, as a matter of law, would still apply to
20 Ms. Carrano. But because it's been paid in full, that
21 practically is not an issue.

22 And I will note that there are only forfeiture orders for
23 Michael Verzaleno, Jr., and Michael Verzaleno, Sr., but there
24 is not a forfeiture order for Ms. Carrano.

25 **THE COURT:** Right. Because I think the facts are

1 that she didn't receive any gain. There's nothing --

2 **MR. WENNER:** That's correct, Your Honor.

3 **THE COURT:** Okay. I got it.

4 So that does mean, though, that as to the three defendants
5 before me, the \$3.5 million is the total agreed-upon
6 restitution and it is fully satisfied today. Yes?

7 **MR. WENNER:** That's the government's understanding,
8 yes, Your Honor.

9 **MR. VARTAN:** Correct, Your Honor.

10 **THE COURT:** Well, then today, as a practical matter,
11 my understanding is the restitution payment plus the
12 accumulated interest, whatever that bottom line is, will be
13 forwarded to Citrus and Allied at the end of the three
14 proceedings. Okay?

15 **MR. WENNER:** Yes, Your Honor.

16 **THE COURT:** All right. Very good.

17 Okay. I think we've gotten restitution squared. So next
18 I'll hear from the government, and in -- and whenever, with
19 respect to your presentation, you wish for the representative
20 for Citrus and Allied to be heard, I'm happy to hear it from
21 him.

22 I'll then turn to the defense and any -- any particular
23 person in the gallery or on the phone who wishes to be heard,
24 happy to hear from you.

25 And then finally, Mr. Verزالeno, Jr., if you wish to be

1 heard -- you don't have to say anything. You have the absolute
2 right to remain silent, and I won't hold your silence against
3 you. But if there is anything that you wish me or anybody else
4 to know, you'll be given that opportunity before I impose
5 sentence. Okay?

6 **THE DEFENDANT:** Thank you, Your Honor.

7 **THE COURT:** All right. Mr. Wenner?

8 **MR. WENNER:** Thank you, Your Honor.

9 And, Your Honor, I'll have Mr. Pisano come to the podium
10 when the government concludes its presentation, if that works
11 for the Court.

12 **THE COURT:** Okay. Sure.

13 **MR. WENNER:** Your Honor, as set forth in the
14 government sentencing memorandum, the government believes that
15 a sentence of 27 months, the top end of the guidelines, taking
16 into account the agreed-upon variance, is sufficient but not
17 greater than necessary to meet the goals of sentencing for
18 Mr. Verzaleno.

19 I want to focus on three of the 3553(a) factors today in
20 the presentation, spending most of the time on the nature and
21 circumstances of the offense and the characteristics of the
22 defendant, but then moving also to the need to reflect the
23 seriousness of this offense and respect of the law and provide
24 for just punishment, and finally the need for deterrence as
25 well.

1 Your Honor, turning to the nature and circumstances of the
2 offense, we're here today because the defendant committed a
3 coordinated fraudulent billing scheme that lasted for seven
4 years and netted his company \$3.5 million. Mr. Verzaleno, as
5 vice president and part owner of the Kearny Steel Corporation,
6 or KSC, conspired with an insider, primarily Gene DiNoto, an
7 employee at Citrus and Allied Essences, to conduct this false
8 billing scheme.

9 Now, reduced to its base level, Your Honor, KSC sold
10 containers and C and A needed to buy containers in order to
11 store and ship the essences and oil that it produced.

12 But as part of this scheme, Mr. Verzaleno and his
13 codefendants would send Citrus and Allied false Kearny Steel
14 invoices.

15 **THE COURT:** From the government's perspective, how
16 did this start with Mr. Verzaleno? In other words, who
17 approached whom for what?

18 **MR. WENNER:** So from the government's perspective,
19 it's our understanding that Mr. DiNoto was the first mover, I
20 would say, in coming up with this scheme. He was kind of the
21 root that reached out to a number of other suppliers, in
22 addition to KSC, and the Verzalenos collectively agreed to join
23 the scheme.

24 You'll note, Your Honor, in the sentencing memorandum,
25 there's another figure, John Criscuolo, who worked for another

1 drum supplier, that, in effect, served as a middleman at the
2 beginning of the scheme that Mr. Verزالeno --

3 **THE COURT:** Right. And that's kind of why I asked.
4 Because in your sentencing memo, you say that Mr. Criscuolo
5 helped start the scheme with Verزالeno and DiNoto back in 2013.
6 I assume -- the reason why I ask is because when I go back and
7 I read the stipulated set of facts for Mr. Kleinman,
8 Mr. DiNoto, Mr. Criscuolo, Mr. Uricoli to try to put this in
9 the larger context --

10 **MR. WENNER:** Sure.

11 **THE COURT:** -- it looks like this scheme started back
12 in 2011. And that when one says Mr. Verزالeno started it --
13 well, I guess what I'm asking you to do is clarify what you
14 mean by that.

15 **MR. WENNER:** Sure.

16 Well, Your Honor, I think -- and this is kind of
17 reflective in the way that this case was charged, the
18 government has viewed this as schemes between Mr. DiNoto and
19 Mr. Criscuolo, and each of the other suppliers separately.

20 **THE COURT:** Okay.

21 **MR. WENNER:** Because the procurement of the false
22 billing materials, invoices that were, in fact, processed by
23 Mr. DiNoto to pay here for -- here at Kearny Steel for drums
24 that were never delivered, that, in itself, is an isolated
25 conspiracy.

1 So I think the way the language reads in the sentencing
2 memorandum, I think it's referring to the particular scheme
3 between Mr. DiNoto and Mr. Criscuolo and the Verzalenos, not in
4 terms of going back before the Verzalenos started providing
5 different -- excuse me, started providing false billing and
6 invoices to C and A that were then processed.

7 Because each defendant needed -- each defendant that
8 belonged to a drum company, Your Honor, needed to make the
9 decision to join the conspiracy so that their personal company
10 would then benefit from getting these payments for drums that
11 were never delivered to C and A. So I think that -- that's
12 the --

13 **THE COURT:** Well, okay. I understand that you --
14 sort of prosecutor-wise, you've made this decision as to how
15 you were going to charge and prosecute the case. The reason
16 why I bring it up, is when I look at it in the larger context,
17 one of the arguments that has come up by defense, and I expect
18 I might hear about it today a little more, is that, you know,
19 Mr. DiNoto was the mover. He had -- he had a plan. The plan
20 was executed two years prior with others to the tune of -- you
21 know, orders of magnitude greater than what the Verzalenos
22 engaged in; and that there was some deal struck with the
23 Verzalenos that if they want the legitimate business,
24 75 percent of the legit invoices going for real drums, they had
25 to play ball with Mr. DiNoto.

1 Now, that doesn't take away from the seriousness of this
2 offense, in my view, but it does put it into some context, and
3 I wanted to get your opinion on that, given that the -- your --
4 your submission doesn't really deal with that issue directly.

5 **MR. WENNER:** Sure, Your Honor.

6 I think that it is correct to say that Mr. DiNoto was the
7 original mover behind the scheme, and that he reached out to
8 the different companies presenting this opportunity.

9 Now, in terms of saying that the legitimate business was
10 necessarily tied to playing ball, I'm not aware of evidence to
11 that particular part of the scheme, although that's certainly
12 an argument that I imagine defense is going to make but is not
13 one of the stipulated facts in the particular -- in this plea
14 agreement.

15 And I would also say that even if that were the case, Your
16 Honor, the defendant had the opportunity at all times to go
17 above Mr. DiNoto and say -- to C and A and say, hey, you've got
18 a crooked employee who is trying to extort me. We just want to
19 sell you drums that you guys want. We don't want to take part
20 in this crooked scheme that -- your own employee is trying to,
21 basically, force us into if they chose to report that.

22 And they never did, Your Honor. For seven years, they
23 decided that this was a scheme that they wanted to take part
24 in, that they wanted to line their own pockets with the money
25 they got for drums that were never delivered to C and A.

1 So I think that's the government's perspective on that
2 question. Does that address --

3 **THE COURT:** It does, thank you.

4 **MR. WENNER:** Okay. Thank you, Your Honor.

5 I would like to then jump into Mr. Verzaleno, Jr.'s
6 conduct specifically, and I think the stipulated facts make it
7 clear that Mr. Verzaleno was an active and integral part of a
8 coordinated effort to steal millions of dollars from C and A;
9 an effort that required his attention and focus for the
10 complete duration of the charged conspiracy here.

11 That, as made clear in the stipulated facts and the
12 government's sentencing memorandum, Mr. Verzaleno was the
13 go-between, the one tasked with maintaining the conspiratorial
14 relationship between his company and Eugene DiNoto, the
15 employee at Citrus and Allied who made this -- who processed
16 the false invoices.

17 Mr. Verzaleno was in constant contact with Mr. DiNoto, and
18 in that contact, he constantly sought to avoid attracting
19 scrutiny by essentially keeping Mr. DiNoto happy. The
20 stipulated facts lay out examples of where Mr. Verzaleno
21 approved advanced payments upon Mr. DiNoto's demand to keep
22 everything copacetic with the conspiracy.

23 And you can also see, Your Honor, that Mr. Verzaleno and
24 Mr. DiNoto engaged in coded conversations to hide what exactly
25 they were doing. That enabled them to secretly discuss the

1 timing of different false invoices and the kickbacks that were
2 associated with those invoices.

3 These efforts, Your Honor, they required thought; they
4 required follow-through and reflection and planning.

5 Mr. Verzaleno never hesitated, over these seven years, to
6 facilitate the issuance of these false invoices for \$15,000,
7 \$30,000 at a time, for seven years. This was not an aberration
8 in conduct. This was dedication to continuous effort until the
9 scheme was discovered.

10 Now, throughout this --

11 **THE COURT:** Can I ask --

12 **MR. WENNER:** Sure.

13 **THE COURT:** -- what kind of investigation was
14 performed on Kearny in terms of its books and records?

15 **MR. WENNER:** From C and A's perspective, Your Honor,
16 or the government?

17 **THE COURT:** From the government's perspective, when
18 you investigated this case.

19 **MR. WENNER:** Sure.

20 **THE COURT:** Yeah, go ahead.

21 **MR. WENNER:** This actually dovetails into my next
22 point, Your Honor, so great timing.

23 The -- the issue with the Verzalenos, as opposed to some
24 of the other defendants, is that the Verzalenos did sell
25 legitimate product, legitimate drums to -- to Citrus and

1 Allied. Unfortunately, the records from Citrus and Allied
2 weren't robust enough to really come to a specific conclusion
3 of how much was legitimate and how much was illegitimate or
4 false. And that does differ from some of other defendants
5 where there was only false billings, or the vast majority of
6 the false billings -- the invoices were completely false.

7 **THE COURT:** And you weren't able to corroborate
8 through the Kearny records, because --

9 **MR. WENNER:** That is -- that was what the government
10 was, in fact, forced to do. The government was essentially
11 forced --

12 **THE COURT:** Well, it's not forced to do. I mean,
13 it's part of your investigation. You want to come to court
14 with a provable amount, you have to do it.

15 **MR. WENNER:** Right. Exactly, Your Honor.

16 **THE COURT:** That's why I'm asking you what did you
17 do.

18 **MR. WENNER:** Yes. That was, in fact, what the
19 government did do.

20 The government reverse engineered, using Kearny Steel's
21 own billing records that were seized as part of a search from
22 their headquarters, to determine how the different legitimate
23 sales were documented and how the illegitimate sales were
24 documented.

25 And through that search and through that analysis, the

1 government discovered two different sets of bookkeeping, one
2 that followed the normal practice of keeping the bills of
3 lading that were signing by both the drivers bringing the
4 containers down to Maryland, signed by representatives of
5 C and A.

6 And then, Your Honor, there's the false invoice
7 bookkeeping method where the defendants were required to create
8 doctored records, essentially, using a different process
9 without getting the signatures from the driver, the signatures
10 from C and A.

11 And through that, the government was able to determine
12 that these two bookkeeping processes were how the defendants
13 kept track of all their sales, but also how they kept track of
14 the false invoices that they were getting processed through
15 Mr. DiNoto and legitimate sales.

16 **THE COURT:** And so let me make sure I get it.

17 The government had obtained all of the books and records
18 of Kearny, had gone through and methodically compared the one
19 process for legitimate invoices and the other process for the
20 illegitimate invoicing, and, presumably, there was -- what I'm
21 hearing about is it. In other words, there aren't any other
22 customers for which the government obtained evidence this was
23 going on with; am I right about that? It's C and A is the
24 victim. There aren't any others that you found similar
25 evidence of similar fraud?

1 **MR. WENNER:** C and A was the government's focus, Your
2 Honor, but I think in review of the complete books, there
3 wasn't evidence that was brought to light that at least was
4 similar to the scheme with C and A. But the government is not
5 aware of any other defraud -- fraudulent conduct with respect
6 to other customers.

7 **THE COURT:** Okay. All right. Thank you.

8 **MR. WENNER:** So -- and, Your Honor, one of the
9 themes, I think, of the defendants' sentencing memorandum, but
10 also has been a theme since the beginning of this case, was
11 that there are these legitimate businesses -- excuse me,
12 legitimate drums that were sent to Kearny Steel. And now at
13 sentencing, that's a big part of their mitigation argument,
14 that a lot of these were, in fact, legitimate.

15 **THE COURT:** I actually think a big part of
16 Mr. Verzaleno, Jr.'s, mitigation is the rest of his life. I
17 mean, that's how I see it. I see the mitigation as very little
18 in terms of trying to explain away what he did here, if
19 anything. It sounds like Mr. Verzaleno has run toward it.
20 He's admitted to every single person in this room and every
21 single person at his business exactly what he did.

22 And Mr. Verzaleno, to your credit, you're one of the few
23 defendants that come before me calling what you did a crime.
24 You used that word. It wasn't a mistake, it wasn't a bad
25 choice; it was a crime. And that means much to the Court,

1 because it means you're really wrestling with what you did over
2 these years.

3 So to me, the mitigation is all these people here and all
4 the letters I've read and all the people who have spoken about
5 how when no one is looking, Mr. Verzaleno has showed up in ways
6 that frankly -- I mean, I'm curious to hear what you think, but
7 I haven't quite seen someone of this caliber in terms of
8 everything else he's done in his life.

9 **MR. WENNER:** Of course, Your Honor. And I think the
10 letters and the presence in this courtroom today is certainly
11 something that should be commended, and is something that Your
12 Honor, of course, is going to take into account.

13 But I think two things can be true, Your Honor. I think
14 the fact that he can be so admired by his employees and the
15 community that he is in can be true at the same time when he
16 was taking part in and orchestrating a very pernicious scheme
17 defrauding a family business. And I think that goes, again, to
18 the fact that there are legitimate and illegitimate sales; I
19 think this is something that Mr. Verzaleno chose to execute
20 against a legitimate customer.

21 This wasn't an unknown company that he never worked with
22 and was a faceless entity that he chose to defraud. This was a
23 customer that he actually sold to, but that relationship didn't
24 stop him from stealing millions of dollars from that company
25 and harming its employees.

1 I also think the fact that it made it hard -- the fact
2 that there were legitimate sales made this scheme harder to
3 detect than the ones that other defendants that work with Gene
4 DiNoto --

5 **THE COURT:** Well, they were really hard to detect,
6 too. Mr. DiNoto did this for 13, 14 years. I mean --

7 **MR. WENNER:** That's correct, Your Honor. But I would
8 emphasize that once Mr. DiNoto was fired and C and A started
9 looking at the books, it was evident that these companies that
10 sold no drums to C and A were participating in a fraudulent
11 scheme.

12 But because KSC sold legitimate product, it required years
13 of extra investigation on behalf of the government to, in fact,
14 discover the fact that Mr. Verzaleno was taking part in this
15 fraudulent billing scheme and determining how much of these
16 sales were legitimate versus illegitimate. It made it harder
17 to detect than some of the other similarly situated defendants.

18 And I think, Your Honor, the fact that the legitimate
19 sales, millions of dollars in legitimate sales that KSC
20 recouped from C and A was not enough for Mr. Verzaleno, the
21 fact that he decided to get more money through this fraudulent
22 billing scheme, highlights the greed that really drove this
23 offense.

24 **THE COURT:** Well, that's why, you know, I just
25 noticed -- I was looking at the dates, and Mr. Verzaleno gets

1 his sentencing memo to you and me on the 5th, I get yours on
2 the 10th, and you don't really deal with the mitigation at all.
3 I mean, you call it what he did is greedy. And, yes, in some
4 ways it is. But, you know, there's just not a word in this
5 memorandum about, you know, all this.

6 So that's why I'm asking, you know, like, is it that
7 simple? Is it that black and white? Isn't it more messy than
8 that?

9 **MR. WENNER:** I think the offense itself, Your Honor,
10 is, respectfully, pretty black and white. I think the conduct
11 of the offense -- and the fact that Mr. Verzaleno isn't calling
12 it a crime, you know, reflects just how brazen the crime was.
13 And I think the -- in terms of, you know, his role in the
14 community and the clear admiration that those around him have
15 for him, that's something that the government, you know,
16 doesn't investigate, doesn't have insight to counter or -- what
17 the people behind me clearly think about him, so it's --

18 **THE COURT:** I don't know about that. I've had many
19 AUSAs who come before me, and that's why I just thought this
20 memorandum was a little bit unusual in that, you know, you --
21 and this is not against you, Mr. Wenner, I'm not saying
22 today --

23 **MR. WENNER:** No, no, I understand, Your Honor.

24 **THE COURT:** But, you know, they -- they deal with it
25 head on. If they disagree with any of the characterizations or

1 believe that the evidence is not sufficient, I'll hear about
2 it. Or -- or they take it into account. And you're
3 recommending the high end for a -- you know, a gentleman who
4 hasn't had any prior criminal history. And it is serious, and
5 I don't wish to send any alternative message to C and A. I
6 mean, C and A is out \$29 million total.

7 But here, you're recommending the high end, which is
8 usually reserved for individuals who either have lengthy
9 criminal histories or have obstructed justice. I mean, some of
10 the other defendants have engaged in all kinds of shenanigans
11 while on release that Mr. Verzaleno hasn't. So I'm just trying
12 to understand why the -- why that's the recommendation in the
13 absence of any real treatment of the mitigation.

14 **MR. WENNER:** Sure. I think a few points, Your Honor.
15 I think it's worth noting that a lot of the acts that are
16 discussed in these sentencing memorandums -- or excuse me, the
17 supporting letters occurred the same time that this -- this
18 whole scheme was happening; that it does reflect a certain
19 dichotomy and duality in Mr. Verzaleno's psyche, that he was
20 able to somehow compartmentalize the good things that he was
21 doing to those around him while still maintaining this scheme.

22 And, again, Your Honor, the scheme -- it was not
23 something -- this wasn't a one-time loan where Mr. Verzaleno
24 fraudulently or falsely inflated assets to get more money in a
25 time of need for his company. It wasn't a one-time -- it

1 wasn't a one-time thing, Your Honor. This was something that
2 Mr. Verzaleno paid attention to month after month after month
3 for seven years. This was something that he was conscious
4 about what he was doing. And that he needed to reflect upon
5 advancing payments to Eugene DiNoto, making sure that
6 Mr. DiNoto got his kickbacks. This was something that
7 Mr. Verzaleno took care to make sure was successful.

8 And it happened at the same time that he was doing all of
9 these acts for his employees and those around him.

10 I would perhaps also note, Your Honor, that one of -- you
11 know, a lot of these memorandums note about the generosity that
12 Mr. Verzaleno has in terms of -- you know, there are examples
13 of him buying cars for employees who got into car accidents,
14 paying tuition for individuals who needed them, acts of
15 generosity that bred loyalty to those around -- those around
16 him to him.

17 **THE COURT:** Uh-huh.

18 **MR. WENNER:** And I think that in a way, perhaps Your
19 Honor could then see how the company as a whole was able to go
20 along with this conspiracy.

21 **THE COURT:** I don't -- you have no evidence of that.

22 **MR. WENNER:** No, I --

23 **THE COURT:** That's not -- and you know what I was
24 thinking about when it came to all of these acts, which is you
25 really have to know a person before they will admit to you that

1 they have lost their wife to cancer and they can't pay the
2 college tuition, or they can't afford their daughter's wedding,
3 or they got locked up again, or they are using again. I mean,
4 you only know that, as a person to be able to help, if that
5 person trusts you. And there is absolutely no evidence that
6 the guy hauling those drums onto the --

7 **MR. WENNER:** Of course not, Your Honor. And I don't
8 want Your Honor to think that's what I was implying.

9 **THE COURT:** Okay.

10 **MR. WENNER:** If that's what Your Honor took from
11 that, I apologize. That was poorly worded on my part.

12 **THE COURT:** I think the real take-home for me is that
13 it takes a certain kind of person that others will be so frank
14 about their own difficulties, and it takes a certain kind of
15 place where we just don't see that many places in this world
16 where you work for 40 or 50 years anymore. And I just want to
17 give due credit to the folks who built that business, not to
18 take away from Citrus and Allied, which I'm sure has its own
19 wonderful features for its people who are loyal to them.
20 That's why I say it's messy.

21 But I don't think that, you know, the fact that
22 Mr. Verzaleno has been a man who extends himself is the reason
23 why this conspiracy went on for so long.

24 This is how I see it. You can tell me why I'm wrong.
25 Okay? You can tell me why the evidence is different.

1 This is a very big company. They have a lot of customers,
2 and they have diversified over the last ten years. They do a
3 lot of different things.

4 And it is -- those of us who do not make \$3.5 million over
5 one year or five years or ten years, it seems like a lot of
6 money. But to a company that has this kind of infrastructure,
7 it doesn't excuse what Mr. Verzaleno did, but can you see how
8 the drip, drip, drip of it could go unnoticed and really
9 unthought about, ironically, for a man who is so thoughtful
10 otherwise? He's not -- he's not really realizing just how
11 horrible this act was until he's got to admit it to everybody,
12 until he gets caught.

13 But, in other words, we're talking about it today, as we
14 should, with our spotlight on this incident. But in the
15 everyday world of this company, I'm not sure it got that
16 attention.

17 **MR. WENNER:** I think, Your Honor, the amount of
18 communications that Mr. Verzaleno, Jr., had with Mr. DiNoto --

19 **THE COURT:** Okay.

20 **MR. WENNER:** -- the care that he took to make sure
21 that Mr. DiNoto was happy, so that this false billing scheme
22 could continue really counters against that idea that this was
23 something that was lost in the shuffle in his business.

24 **THE COURT:** Tell me about the communications. Like,
25 what do you mean?

1 **MR. WENNER:** So I think in the plea agreement, in the
2 stipulated facts --

3 **THE COURT:** Okay.

4 **MR. WENNER:** -- there is at least one example, Your
5 Honor, where Mr. Verzaleno's role is really discussed at the
6 bottom of Page 3, going into Page 4. And I think this is the
7 sort of communication and coordination that makes it clear that
8 this was something that was a priority for Mr. Verzaleno and
9 wasn't just something that was lost in the balance sheet of a
10 company that admittedly is very big. But still, I think, the
11 effort that he put into this offense makes it clear that there
12 was a reason that he was doing this, that this extra
13 three-and-a-half-million dollars was not a rounding error to
14 Mr. Verzaleno, Jr.

15 Here, we've got examples, and particularly the example
16 where when Mr. DiNoto wants his money before he submitted a
17 false invoice, he asked Mr. Verzaleno: Would it be possible to
18 get that FedEx, the FedEx that contained 10,000, \$15,000, in
19 cash for these kickbacks, out today or tomorrow before
20 Thanksgiving?

21 And Mr. Verzaleno responds immediately: I'm going to send
22 it today.

23 They also take part in these coded languages -- excuse me,
24 coded language to make sure that only they know what they are
25 talking about in regards to the kickbacks.

1 That's at the top of Page 4.

2 **THE COURT:** Right, no, I understand -- I saw those.

3 I guess what I'm really getting at is, maybe it's not in
4 the stipulated set of facts, but what's the -- what's the
5 volume that you're saying they talked all the time, they had
6 this really tight relationship? Like, these do -- these are
7 good examples of the kind of connection between Mr. DiNoto and
8 Mr. Verzaleno, Jr., as opposed to Senior and Ms. Carrano.

9 But, you know, this was in response to my saying this is a
10 pretty complicated business, and this was one of the -- the
11 customers, there's no evidence of this happening with anybody
12 else.

13 Do you have more information in terms of the nature of
14 this relationship over time with Mr. DiNoto?

15 **MR. WENNER:** Well, I think I could point also to the
16 number of FedEx packages that were sent between the two, as
17 the -- the FedEx records available, and we went back to 2015.
18 But from those, there were 105 FedEx packages.

19 **THE COURT:** Okay. Since 2015?

20 **MR. WENNER:** Since 2015. And there are two other
21 years on top of that that are not captured in the FedEx
22 records.

23 And if I do the math on that correctly, Your Honor,
24 that's -- averages about to around two a month on average, but
25 the frequency of this did vary depending.

1 So that is -- it wasn't a regular FedEx package that they
2 just set it and forget it, as shown by these communications
3 with Mr. DiNoto. This is something that varied based on when
4 Mr. DiNoto wanted his payments, varied based on how many false
5 invoices they were submitting to C and A. It would have
6 required attention, Your Honor.

7 And I would also say that, you know, if this is something
8 that really didn't matter to C and A, or something that they
9 lost track of, again, the option was always there for
10 Mr. Verzaleno and his co-defendants to tell C and A that this
11 wasn't -- this was going on and this wasn't something they
12 wanted to play ball with anymore.

13 They could always go above Mr. DiNoto, who was the manager
14 of this one shipping outlet for C and A, to say that, you know,
15 this -- either this legitimate business isn't enough for us to
16 commit fraud, or we want to keep this legitimate business and
17 we don't want to defraud you millions of dollars. But this
18 was -- but he never did that for seven years, Your Honor.

19 So I think that's what I push back on pretty strongly,
20 about whether this was something that was just something that
21 Mr. Verzaleno and his codefendants could set and forget and
22 just not realize what was happening. This was a coordinated
23 effort that varied in terms of frequency, depending where you
24 were in the conspiracy. There's communications between the
25 two. It was not a one-off decision, Your Honor. This is

1 something that required him to consistently confront the fact
2 that he was paying kickbacks to Mr. DiNoto in order for him to
3 process invoices for drums that were never delivered.

4 So I think that -- and I'm happy to address the point
5 more, Your Honor, if you have more follow-up. But I think
6 that's -- that would be the government's position on that
7 question.

8 **THE COURT:** Okay.

9 **MR. WENNER:** A few more points here, moving into
10 the -- you know, the need for the sentence to reflect the
11 seriousness of the offense and to promote respect of the law
12 and provide just punishment for the offense.

13 At this point, I think it's -- I've communicated the
14 government's view of how serious this offense was, but I wanted
15 to take the time to counter some of the additional points about
16 restitution and the Urcioli sentence and how the government
17 should take those into account in determining where the
18 sentence should lie.

19 You know, as was previewed in our discussion about
20 restitution, you know, we anticipate the defense to argue that
21 this upfront payment of restitution should justify, at least in
22 part, a noncustodial sentence.

23 And, Your Honor, while the payment of restitution should
24 certainly be commended, its impact on Your Honor's sentence
25 should not be of the magnitude that eliminates any

1 incarcerative sentence.

2 Here, Mr. Verzaleno, he's a successful businessman and
3 who, as a result, has liquid wealth. And early payments of
4 restitution shouldn't be used -- shouldn't be credited to -- to
5 eliminate an incarcerative sentence.

6 **THE COURT:** I -- I get that. And I don't buy into
7 that. But -- but I do have a question for you on that.

8 **MR. WENNER:** Sure.

9 **THE COURT:** Which is, you know, in another plea
10 agreement, in a stipulated set of facts, the government's
11 representation is that the Verzalenos caused three times the
12 loss that you ultimately agreed to. And I consider the
13 restitution to be a proxy for the loss, because this is not a
14 complicated scheme.

15 I mean, you -- I see that there's lots of efforts to --
16 you know, it's serious, but it's not complicated.

17 **MR. WENNER:** I understand.

18 **THE COURT:** So, in other words, right, the
19 restitution is a really good measure of the actual harm.

20 So with that in mind, to me, the salient point was that at
21 the end of the day, the government's investigation pointed to
22 an amount that was about 10 percent of the total loss to Citrus
23 and Allied. And once you all came to an agreement -- you know,
24 the defense did the right thing, they just said we'll pay it.
25 I mean, that is the right thing to do if you've got it.

1 **MR. WENNER:** Right.

2 **THE COURT:** It doesn't mean that the folks who don't
3 have it should get a longer sentence, but those who do and
4 come -- you know, come correct, you know, it's not an
5 insignificant fact.

6 **MR. WENNER:** Sure.

7 **THE COURT:** But the most significant to me is where
8 you ended up as the agreed-upon amount.

9 **MR. WENNER:** Sure.

10 Your Honor, I think this reflects back to the difficulties
11 that -- the risks that were inherent, and the fact that the
12 government needed to come to that amount and needed to prove
13 that false billing, in fact, occurred through the use of not
14 the victim's records but Kearny Steel's records.

15 So the government was in the position where it was going
16 to have to put on an expert that reviewed all of these
17 different billings and determine that from the government's
18 analysis, we stand by this analysis, there were two different
19 sets of bookkeeping. And the reason for this -- these two
20 different sets of bookkeeping was that for one of -- one set of
21 books, these were the illegitimate false invoices; for the
22 others, these were legitimate -- legitimate shipments.

23 And that came with it a lot of litigation risk both at
24 trial, needing to put on our own expert to interpret the
25 defendant's own records, which, of course, would have been

1 countered by their own expert, likely, in other testimony.

2 And then even if there were, in fact, a guilty plea, the
3 risk still remains that at sentencing, we would have to prove
4 that number as well.

5 So this was a number that takes into account that -- that
6 litigation risk. But the government fully stands by that it
7 would have had the evidence, has the evidence to show that
8 \$3.5 million is, in fact, a loss that incurred to C and A.

9 Does that answer Your Honor's question?

10 **THE COURT:** It does. It does.

11 I mean, it just -- it seems like whenever -- you know, we
12 get close to trial, and you have to figure out what will --
13 what you can board beyond a reasonable doubt, the number might
14 change.

15 This one was a significant change from what was in another
16 plea agreement. But I appreciate the government, you know,
17 working to get to the correct resolution.

18 **MR. WENNER:** And just to be clear, when you say
19 another plea agreement, are you referring to some of the
20 other -- like the Urcioli number?

21 **THE COURT:** Yeah, the statement of facts according
22 to -- I can tell you which one it is --

23 **MR. WENNER:** Sure.

24 **THE COURT:** But it specifically said under Kearny
25 Steel that the amount was \$9.8 million. It was Mr. Criscuolo.

1 **MR. WENNER:** I see. I see.

2 **THE COURT:** So -- okay.

3 **MR. WENNER:** And with respect to the -- Mr. Urcioli's
4 sentence, which I think we'll address more for other defendants
5 in this case --

6 **THE COURT:** Urcioli, is that how you're saying it?
7 In my head, I was saying it differently.

8 **MR. WENNER:** That's how the government has been
9 pronouncing it, Your Honor.

10 **THE COURT:** Okay. Very good.

11 **MR. WENNER:** The way -- I would just note that the
12 agreed-upon variance intends to incorporate the reality of
13 Mr. Urcioli's sentence to ensure that the range is not
14 something that doesn't take into account the sentences for
15 related defendants, and ensure that there aren't inappropriate
16 disparities between this and the other defendant.

17 And I would just say for this particular defendant, for
18 Mr. Verzaleno, Jr., the concerns that moved Judge Griggsby in
19 that case are completely absent from Mr. Verzaleno, Jr.'s,
20 situation. There aren't the medical concerns. The age is not
21 a concern here. So I think the government -- or excuse me, the
22 Court need not take that into account further than the
23 agreed-upon variance in the plea agreement for Mr. Verzaleno.

24 **THE COURT:** Which is eaten up by the high-end
25 recommendation. Do you know what I'm saying? Did you

1 recommend high end to anyone -- for anyone else so far?

2 **MR. WENNER:** The --

3 **THE COURT:** Just curious.

4 **MR. WENNER:** Yeah, your Honor, I don't have the
5 answer to that right off the top of my head. But the
6 government for Mr. Urcioli did recommend an incarcerative
7 sentence.

8 **THE COURT:** Yeah. I know.

9 **MR. WENNER:** And the government still believes it
10 would have been appropriate in that case, given the magnitude
11 of that fraud and the deception involved in that case. We
12 recognize Judge Griggsby differed, we respect that, and --

13 **THE COURT:** And Mr. Urcioli, it was \$20 million in
14 loss he agreed, right?

15 **MR. WENNER:** Slightly underneath that, yes; Your
16 Honor, yes.

17 **THE COURT:** Yeah, okay.

18 **MR. WENNER:** And in that case -- and you can -- the
19 transcript of the sentencing is available. I imagine Your
20 Honor may have likely read it already, but that's 22-cr-29,
21 Document 43. I think in that -- if you read that transcript,
22 it's clear, Mr. Urcioli was in grave physical health.

23 **THE COURT:** Yeah, I saw it.

24 **MR. WENNER:** He had an oxygen tank at sentencing, he
25 could barely stand to give his statement at sentencing. He

1 required multi sessions of dialysis every week. He couldn't
2 take care of basic hygiene without -- without daily help. The
3 health concerns of Mr. Urcioli's case were grave.

4 **THE COURT:** Right, yep.

5 **MR. WENNER:** I would note that the government still
6 believes that given the size of that fraud, the fact that he
7 executed it at an advanced age, that's why the government still
8 believed that an incarcerative sentence was appropriate there.

9 And here, we recognize that his sentence is a fact of
10 these related cases, and we wanted to make sure that the
11 guideline range that Your Honor is looking at when determining
12 the sentences for this case take that into account, but we
13 still think that given the seriousness of this offense, its
14 length, the amount of effort that it took to execute, the high
15 end of the guideline range is still important.

16 And, finally, Your Honor, I just want to touch on
17 deterrence here.

18 Your Honor, at the end of serving whatever sentence Your
19 Honor decides upon, Mr. Verزالeno will still be at the helm of
20 the companies that he owns. He'll still find himself in
21 situations where he's in charge of billing. And there may be
22 another situation that arises like this. And the government's
23 view is that a sentence at the high end of the guidelines
24 provides that extra deterrence where one -- in a man who
25 clearly is admired and does generous things to those around

1 him, that that side of him will be present when he is
2 conducting business in the future, that he wouldn't be tempted
3 to fall into another scheme.

4 **THE COURT:** Well, he's told on himself to everybody
5 who will listen, including his competitors and his current
6 customers. I mean, he didn't get those letters without telling
7 them why. So --

8 **MR. WENNER:** That's true. That's absolutely true,
9 Your Honor.

10 **THE COURT:** -- he's self-detering in a very real
11 way.

12 **MR. WENNER:** That's absolutely correct, Your Honor.

13 I just believe it's important to recognize that
14 this new -- this admiration of those -- and respect that people
15 had for him, that was present when Mr. Verzaleno was conducting
16 the criminal conduct that brings us here today. You know, it's
17 not something that -- this is not a situation where
18 Mr. Verzaleno conducted a criminal conspiracy, stopped, changed
19 his life around, and the government is going back, you know, a
20 decade later. This is something where people admired
21 Mr. Verzaleno throughout the time of the conspiracy, but that
22 respect and admiration of the community around him did not stop
23 him from defrauding C and A. He still stole \$3.5 million from
24 that company despite the admiration of the community around
25 him.

1 I just think it's important that both of those things
2 can't be true, Your Honor.

3 **THE COURT:** Oh, absolutely.

4 **MR. WENNER:** And both of those things happened.

5 And, finally, just a general deterrence point, other
6 corporate executives are going to have the same temptation
7 when -- when conducting billing with their clients. And it is
8 entirely possible that there are going to be other corporate
9 executives that are approached by insiders of a client,
10 offering to read them into a conspiracy, to line their pockets
11 with additional millions of dollars. And these other
12 corporations and corporate officers need to know that they
13 can't commit these crimes for years to the tune of millions of
14 dollars and expect only probation or home confinement.

15 This is a serious, serious fraud, Your Honor, that
16 happened over the course of seven years for millions of
17 dollars, and at this point dovetails with the need to reflect
18 the seriousness of the offense. And that's why the government
19 lands on the high end of the guidelines here.

20 If the Court has any other questions, I'm happy to answer;
21 otherwise, I would turn to the president of the victim company
22 here, Mr. Pisano, for his statement.

23 **THE COURT:** Sure. Yes. Thank you. I appreciate
24 that.

25 **RICHARD C. PISANO, JR.:** Good morning.

1 **THE COURT:** Hi, sir.

2 **RICHARD C. PISANO, JR.:** Hi.

3 **THE COURT:** Could you do me a favor, before you
4 start. If you could say and spell your name for the court
5 reporter.

6 **RICHARD C. PISANO, JR.:** Sure. My name is Richard C.
7 Pisano, Jr. And Pisano is spelled P-I-S-A-N-O.

8 **THE COURT:** Thank you.

9 **RICHARD C. PISANO, JR.:** Thank you.

10 Okay to begin?

11 **THE COURT:** Of course. Yes.

12 **RICHARD C. PISANO, JR.:** Thank you.

13 I would like to thank the Court for the opportunity to
14 read this statement.

15 Citrus and Allied Essences, Limited, is a family company
16 founded by my grandparents in 1933. For all that time, we've
17 supplied essential oils for use in flavors and fragrances.
18 Today, the company is managed by the third and fourth
19 generations of the Pisano family.

20 We take seriously the stewardship of operating our
21 92-year-old business. For us, it's not just a business, it's a
22 responsibility. And with that responsibility comes the need to
23 provide our employees with meaningful jobs that include a sense
24 of purpose and self-worth.

25 The fraud committed against us was not just a fraud

1 against Citrus and Allied and its ownership, but also against
2 the people who worked for the company. Citrus and Allied
3 employees, approximately 125 individuals, many of whom are
4 married with children; two of our colleagues have worked at the
5 company for over 50 years; another half a dozen have been with
6 us for over 30 years; and many for over 20 years.

7 The horrible fraud was not only committed against the
8 company, but also against the hundreds of dependents of our
9 employees, including children and elderly parents.

10 The fraud damaged the financial health of our business.
11 The stolen money affected raises, medical insurance, life
12 insurance, and compensation. I don't know how many of our
13 employees were not able to send their children to camp or the
14 college of their choice based on the lack of compensation that
15 they did not get during the period of the fraud, but I am
16 certain that the money that was stolen hurt everyone.

17 That's one tragedy of this crime, you can quantify the
18 amount of money stolen, but not the far-reaching consequences.

19 We ask that when the Court passes sentence, you consider
20 the harm done to our colleagues. We hope that the punishment
21 is a genuine deterrent to others who might intend to defraud
22 any business for which generations of owners and employees have
23 poured their time and their heart and their efforts to build.

24 It might be that a large publicly-traded business could
25 afford such a massive loss of money, but for a family company

1 with limited resources, this wound will take a decade or more
2 to heal.

3 Thank you.

4 **THE COURT:** Thank you so much, Mr. Pisano. I
5 appreciate it.

6 Mr. Vartan?

7 **MR. VARTAN:** Thank you, Your Honor.

8 So with the Court's permission, we would actually like to
9 begin with Karen Verzaleno. She has a statement to the Court.
10 Mr. McGreevey, Mr. Oliver, and then I would like to address the
11 Court, if that's okay.

12 **THE COURT:** Sure. Of course. Yep.

13 **KAREN VERZALENO:** Your Honor, thank you for allowing
14 me to address the Court.

15 **THE COURT:** And Ms. Verzaleno, before you start, if
16 you could give us your name and spell it for the court
17 reporter.

18 **KAREN VERZALENO:** Sure. It's Karen Verzaleno, V, as
19 in Victor, E-R-Z-A-L-E-N-O. And I'm Michael's wife.

20 **THE COURT:** Thanks.

21 **KAREN VERZALENO:** Again, thank you for allowing me to
22 address the Court today. My name is Karen Verzaleno, Michael's
23 wife.

24 I thought a lot about what I wanted to say this morning.
25 My husband has made a terrible mistake. We have spoke about it

1 for hours on end and is always at the top of his mind; and no
2 matter what happens today, it always will be.

3 I'm not here to minimize the situation or make it go away.
4 Unfortunately, I can't.

5 But I'm here to tell the Court that Mike is so much more
6 than the mistake he has made. He's a loving husband, an
7 amazing father, a cherished son, brother, and uncle, and a
8 special friend to so many. He has the biggest heart of anyone
9 I've ever met and the kindest soul.

10 I've always known the lives he touched by his generosity
11 and kindness. And after reading many of the letters submitted
12 to the Court and watching the video, it made me realize just
13 how special he truly is. Mike has helped dozens of people at
14 their darkest and most desperate times. He never did so for
15 applause or credit. He did it because that is who he is. He
16 did it because that is what is in his heart. And although he
17 has never asked for credit, I ask that of you for him.

18 I know, Your Honor, you must look at my husband's crime,
19 but please also look at every other part of his life. Look at
20 the kids he has raised, who want nothing more than to be like
21 Dad; look at the community members who have rallied to his
22 side; look at the nephew he raised like a son; and a sister
23 whose future he has secured; and a parade of employees who have
24 quite literally told this court that Mike has saved their
25 lives.

1 Mike's life, my life are now in your hands, Judge. Please
2 judge the man and his entire life and not just his crime.

3 I know that if you do, you will return Mike to the dozens
4 of people in this courtroom and the hundreds more who depend on
5 his support, encouragement, friendship and love.

6 Thank you.

7 **THE COURT:** Thank you, Ms. Verزالeno.

8 **MR. VARTAN:** Thank you, Your Honor.

9 Mr. McGreevey is on the phone.

10 **THE COURT:** Okay. All right. Let me see if we can
11 go get Mr. McGreevey.

12 **JAMES MCGREEVEY:** Yeah, it's me. I'm here.

13 **THE COURT:** All right. Mr. McGreevey, this is
14 Judge Xinis. Can you hear us?

15 **JAMES MCGREEVEY:** Yes, Judge. Good to hear your
16 voice. Thank you.

17 **THE COURT:** Okay. Thank you.

18 Before you start, if you could speak very clearly and give
19 the court reporter your full name and spell it for her, I would
20 very much appreciate it.

21 **JAMES MCGREEVEY:** Thank you, Your Honor. Thank you,
22 Judge.

23 Yes, my name is -- first name is James, spelled
24 traditionally, and my surname is M-C capital G-R-E-E-V, for
25 Victor, E-Y. And I --

1 **THE COURT:** Yes. And, Mr. McGreevey, I believe you
2 submitted a letter to the Court recently; is that right?

3 **JAMES MCGREEVEY:** Yes; yes, Judge.

4 **THE COURT:** Okay.

5 **JAMES MCGREEVEY:** I submitted a letter, and Judge,
6 just for the record, I have the proud privilege of working with
7 the U.S. District Court in New Jersey with their reentry
8 program. If I could sing the praises of your peer, Judge
9 Madeline Cox Arleo, with whom we work on reentry.

10 But if I could just talk just about Michael just briefly,
11 Judge.

12 **THE COURT:** Sure.

13 **JAMES MCGREEVEY:** And I don't know any of the
14 particulars of the circumstances, but I just, Judge, working in
15 Second Chances and in the New Jersey Reentry Corporation, just
16 by way of background, we serve slightly over 25,000
17 court-involved persons, whether it's federal prisons, state
18 prison, county jails, persons returning from drug court, as
19 well as military courts of justice, our veterans. We have --
20 we have four former governors serving on our board, a Supreme
21 Court justice, Cardinal Tobin from the Archdiocese of Newark.

22 So, I mean, I like to think -- and we've been the
23 recipients of numerous federal and state grants, and I can go
24 on about what we do. But if I can, I just want to speak about
25 Michael and his leadership with Kearny Steel.

1 Michael has been a great partner in providing
2 opportunities for folks coming home from incarceration. And so
3 often when somebody has a protracted, expanded record, that
4 employers -- you know, even national employers that may be
5 located out of New Jersey in terms of their home domicile have
6 difficulties hiring, for insurance purposes, et cetera, as well
7 as litigation concerns, court involved or justice involved
8 individuals.

9 But Michael has a unique willingness to be able to bring
10 people in. And, you know, I -- I just -- Michael understands
11 the gravity of his mistakes, and he's spoken openly and
12 powerfully about redemption and forgiveness, and I appreciate
13 who and what he is. From my perspective, he's been very
14 straightforward in an almost agonizing way speaking about, you
15 know, how this has impacted, you know, his reconsideration of
16 his life and his value system in going forward.

17 But one thing that I just wanted to share with you, Judge,
18 is that he has been an incredible supporter of second chances
19 and giving guys, predominantly guys, but guys and gals an
20 opportunity to work where they would have never had. And I
21 think it's who he is, where he's from, his hands-on experience
22 in terms of as an employee.

23 And, you know, Judge, you know, Michael being Michael, has
24 always had his heart and a willingness to give somebody a
25 second chance. So ironically, as he's here today before you,

1 Your Honor, I just wanted -- you know, I happened to be -- this
2 is lending to the season of forgiveness, but second chances and
3 recognizing, as the old spiritual says, we fall down but we get
4 up. And God willing, Michael can get up even stronger, more
5 aware and more profoundly engage with his -- not only his
6 morality and spirituality in the sense of second chances, for
7 which historically, Judge, I'm just telling you in terms of New
8 Jersey, there aren't many Michaels, and so I cherish them.

9 And I've never done this before, but I feel strongly about
10 this, because this guy has been there when a lot of other
11 people were like, "Oh, Jim, we would love to hire your guys,
12 but send us the guys with the parking tickets."

13 And I'm like, you know -- and I say to employers
14 respectfully, that's not second chances. I've got plenty of
15 parking tickets. Second chances are people who have made
16 significant serious mistakes of judgment and wanted, by virtue
17 of their depth of their awareness and their commitment, to do
18 something different.

19 So that's a probably ultra long way, Your Honor, Judge, of
20 making a personal appeal for somebody who embodied second
21 chances in the most fundamental real way with people that have
22 committed a wide range of crimes from first-degree crimes
23 downward. And he's got a good heart and a good soul, and I
24 think he gets it.

25 So thanks, Your Honor.

1 **THE COURT:** Thank you so much. Very -- very much
2 appreciate your words.

3 **JAMES MCGREEVEY:** No, thank you so much. And thank
4 you for what you do. And we love the Federal District Court in
5 New Jersey. We have a great working partnership. So, you
6 know -- you know, so they -- we work with their reentry court
7 and their renew court.

8 And, in fact, we're just about to sign a partnership with
9 the Federal District Court dealing with our veterans. And I
10 have a meeting with one of your peers this week, and -- with
11 the head of Probation. So we actually have very much of an
12 integrated service delivery system.

13 **THE COURT:** Well, keep it up. It's wonderful.

14 **JAMES MCGREEVEY:** Thank you, Your Honor. Thank you
15 so much.

16 **THE COURT:** Thank you.

17 **JAMES MCGREEVEY:** God speed. Thank you for your
18 time. Bye-bye.

19 **THE COURT:** Mr. Vartan?

20 **MR. VARTAN:** Thank you.

21 And, Judge, finally, we have Mr. Oliver who would like to
22 address the Court, and then I will.

23 **THE COURT:** Okay. Mr. Oliver, can you --

24 **ABDUL OLIVER:** I have a little stuttering problem,
25 Your Honor. A little stuttering.

1 **THE COURT:** Oh, that's all right.

2 **ABDUL OLIVER:** And I'm a little nervous. I never did
3 this.

4 **THE COURT:** It's totally understandable. Let me try
5 to make the butterflies fly in formation, as they say. So you
6 can't get rid of the butterflies, but know you are good. You
7 take your time.

8 If you can do me a favor and give me your first and last
9 name and spell it for the court reporter.

10 **ABDUL OLIVER:** My name is Abdul Oliver, A-B-D-U-L,
11 O-L-I-V-E-R, Oliver.

12 Good afternoon, Judge. This is not my first time in a
13 courtroom. I am a three-strike felon. I spent years in jail.
14 I would still be in jail or maybe worser if not for this man,
15 Michael Verzaleno. He saved me, Judge. He showed me what it
16 is to be a man; what it means to be an earner; what it means to
17 support a family; what it means to be a father to my son.

18 You probably read my letter and saw what I said in the
19 video. I could have said so much more.

20 Mike not only gave me a job, but he made sure I kept it.
21 When I didn't want to come to work, he called me and got me out
22 of bed. The times that I didn't -- I came close to falling
23 back into the streets, he caught me.

24 He isn't a normal boss. He isn't a normal man. I call
25 him an angel in my letter, and he is. I call him my backbone,

1 and he is.

2 He calls my son on Christmas Eve pretending to be Santa.
3 He has paid for vacations, medical bills, even drove me to
4 doctor appointments. He is my family, Judge, and he is family
5 for all the people you see in the courtroom, and all of those
6 who cannot be here today.

7 There are dozens of employees who could tell the same
8 story as mine's; dozens of people who would not be husbands,
9 fathers and providers. They are -- they are -- without Mike.
10 Dozens -- yes. Dozens of people would be in jail without Mike.
11 This man does not quit, so please, Judge, don't quit on him.
12 Please.

13 Too many of us, including me, are counting on this man.
14 We need him in our lives.

15 Thank you, Judge.

16 **THE COURT:** Thank you, sir.

17 **MR. VARTAN:** Thank you, Judge.

18 So let me -- let me start, I think, by pointing out the
19 obvious, but I think it's important for record purposes.

20 As Mr. McGreevey said, there aren't that many Mike
21 Verzalenos in New Jersey. I don't know that there are that
22 many Mike Verzalenos, quite frankly, anywhere.

23 In the courtroom today, all of the people who are sitting
24 behind me, all of the people who are back in Newark who
25 couldn't be here today because they are running a plant, they

1 all agree.

2 **THE COURT:** And there's -- just so that the record is
3 clear, because I don't think we've made this record yet,
4 there's probably 50 people here, maybe more.

5 **MR. VARTAN:** Judge, when we -- at least 50 people.

6 **THE COURT:** Okay.

7 **MR. VARTAN:** And when we scheduled today, or
8 rescheduled today, people demanded to come down so much so that
9 the people behind me rented a bus so they could be here on time
10 in person to speak on behalf of and be in support of
11 Mr. Verzaleno.

12 And I don't know if I've ever -- I've been doing this
13 quite a bit of time. I don't know if I've ever had the
14 opportunity to hear from people who were three-strike felons
15 and raise themselves up in part with the help of their boss,
16 and also the former governor, all speaking about this same man,
17 all speaking in unison.

18 When we say in our sentencing memorandum, Judge, that he
19 is unique and he is remarkable, and that he's one of one, we
20 certainly meant it. And the people here in support today are
21 here to show that.

22 Now, I want to address a few points because we can't run
23 from the offense conduct, and we don't intend to.

24 As Your Honor rightly pointed out, Mr. Verzaleno fully
25 acknowledges, he has done it hundreds of times at this point,

1 not only to the government and to the Court, but to his
2 customers, his friends, his family, suppliers. He admits he
3 committed a crime. And there is no excuse for this crime.
4 He'll tell you that himself when I'm through.

5 But it is important to put it in some context, and I think
6 Your Honor already has, but I just want to hit upon a few
7 points.

8 And part of this comes from the fact that there are a
9 number of judges here in the district and a number of
10 prosecutors who have bits and pieces of his case. So to pull
11 all of the strings together, as Your Honor has admirably done,
12 is not so easy. But you have it mostly right, in the sense
13 that Mr. Verzaleno is not the architect of any conspiracy or
14 scheme. What happened here actually predates, Judge, Gene
15 DiNoto. It goes back to Elliott Kleinman, who was in DiNoto's
16 position prior to DiNoto.

17 Now, I don't know everything that the government knows,
18 but as far as I can tell from having poured through the
19 discovery, this conspiracy that was originally concocted by
20 Mr. Kleinman began in 2007 maybe. So years before anyone was
21 ever going to Mr. Verzaleno and bringing this up.

22 So that's the first point that I want to make.

23 The second point is also an important one because there is
24 a little bit of ducking and dodging, and I don't mean that
25 disrespectfully toward Mr. Wenner when he was up here at the

1 podium. Your Honor, I specifically asked him, show me the
2 communications. Show me where Mr. Verzaleno and Mr. DiNoto
3 were speaking on the phone, text messaging every minute, every
4 day.

5 Judge, there aren't any.

6 Now, again, I'm not running from some of the e-mails that
7 were in the facts stipulation or some that appeared in the PSR.
8 But remember, we were on the precipice of going to trial before
9 we had a late-night or Friday late-night discovery dump on us,
10 the Friday before the Monday of trial. So we've been through
11 this case differently in a way different than many pleas.

12 There were no text messages, there were no e-mails where
13 these two individuals were repeatedly communicating, because
14 were they -- were they to exist, you would have heard about
15 them.

16 Now, again, I'm not running from the fact that there was
17 criminal conduct here, but I'm trying to put it in context,
18 especially when the government, in my view, has the temerity to
19 stand up here and talk about defense conduct, defense conduct,
20 defense conduct, not having addressed any of the arguments that
21 we made in our submission. And knowing full well that 3553(a)
22 is more than 3553(a)(2). There are other pieces to this that
23 the government simply doesn't address.

24 And, Judge, the final point I want to make on the offense
25 conduct, because I think it's important, and it's not something

1 that was noted, Gene DiNoto was the first cousin of one of the
2 Pisanos. I don't fully purport to know the familial
3 relationship, but there was a relationship there.

4 And we -- we represented to the government, so this comes
5 as no surprise, that when Mr. DiNoto pitched this scheme to
6 Mr. Verzaleno, he told him, meaning Mr. DiNoto told
7 Mr. Verzaleno, that the Pisanos were fully aware.

8 Now, I presume that's not true. I presume that
9 Mr. Verzaleno could have picked up and should have picked up
10 the phone to say that I'm being shaken down by your cousin, but
11 he didn't do that; otherwise, we would not be here.

12 But it still -- it still stands to reason that when he's
13 hearing from the first cousin of the owners of the company,
14 that everyone knows about this, everyone is on board, that
15 maybe he wouldn't think twice about it.

16 **THE COURT:** But why would they do that? I mean, why
17 would they -- like, just logically, why would they say, well,
18 we're happy to be victimized this way? I mean, it doesn't
19 really make sense.

20 **MR. VARTAN:** It doesn't, except what Mr. DiNoto has
21 said is, it was a way for Mr. Pisano and him to take out money
22 from the company without having to pay taxes. So that is what
23 was represented. Again, not true. Should have questioned it.
24 Didn't. But I wanted to give that important context.

25 The other important context to give here, and Your Honor

1 already alluded to it -- and, again, I don't want to minimize
2 at all. I certainly understand and respect that just as Kearny
3 Steel is a 75-year-old business, C and A is a 93-year-old
4 business, I learned today, and we're not looking to minimize in
5 any way at all.

6 But the fact of the matter is that Kearny Steel had
7 hundreds of customers at this time. They had about \$65 million
8 in business that they were doing each and every year. So when
9 you put that in context, and you take the
10 three-and-a-half-million dollars over seven years, you're
11 talking about \$500,000.

12 Now, again, not insignificant. I don't want to call it --
13 I think someone said rounding errors, nothing like that. But
14 the point is, that this is not something that Mr. Verzaleno was
15 sweating over each and every day in the way that the government
16 has represented.

17 And the final point that I want to make on this, and,
18 again, Your Honor picked up on it, it's not only that the 9.8
19 or \$9.9 million figure appears in a plea allocution, it
20 appeared in the indictment. That number was in the indictment.
21 And so when the government says it poured over facts and
22 figures and logbooks and ledgers, no, that did not happen.
23 That did not happen here.

24 **THE COURT:** You mean prior to charging?

25 **MR. VARTAN:** Prior to charging, and until really we

1 sat with them face to face and showed them some of our work
2 product.

3 And so it's not only that we're talking about
4 three-and-a-half-million dollars, very significant, but it's
5 from \$10 million that the government believed this was at the
6 very beginning of the case.

7 So not by way of minimizing, but I wanted to set that into
8 some context.

9 I want to turn, though, to some of the sentencing
10 disparity issues, Mr. Urcioli and restitution, if I could,
11 because I think there's some important points there as well.

12 So first of all, setting this into context, there's about
13 \$30 million that C and A was defrauded of over the course of
14 time. There are three primary companies that are involved:
15 Tunnel, Barrel, Mr. Urcioli, about \$20 million; Fernicola,
16 which is about \$6 million, Mr. Schaeffer was the principle
17 there.

18 **THE COURT:** That's Mr. Schaeffer.

19 **MR. VARTAN:** He's not yet been sentenced. And then
20 Kearny Steel.

21 Now, with respect to both Tunnel, Barrel, and also to
22 P. Fernicola, there was almost no product, or in the case of
23 Fernicola, no product at all that was actually shipped from the
24 company to C and A ever over the course of at least seven
25 years, and in some cases, like in Fernicola's case, more than a

1 decade.

2 Now, Mr. Urcioli, notwithstanding the fact that there was
3 roughly a \$20 million loss, and, Judge, notwithstanding the
4 fact that not only there was a \$20 million loss, but
5 Mr. Urcioli was actually taking as a business deduction the
6 money that he was paying to Mr. DiNoto. So he was committing
7 another crime, which he plead guilty to. That did not happen
8 here.

9 Mr. Verzaleno, Kearny Steel, paid all of their taxes,
10 always. There's no allegation to the contrary. Mr. Urcioli
11 received a probationary sentence, and we learned this morning,
12 I did not know, that effectively, has paid no restitution, a
13 few hundred thousand dollars of the \$20 million he stole from
14 C and A.

15 Whereas we said, and made clear right from the very
16 beginning, there's a three-and-a-half-million-dollar
17 restitution obligation that we accepted and that we've already
18 satisfied not today, but several months ago. And the point
19 there is not so much that the money was paid. The point there
20 is that Mr. Verzaleno is so genuine in the remorse and wanting
21 to make everything right, not only with C and A, but with all
22 of the people who are here in support of him today, with his
23 friends, his family, his coworkers, and so I don't believe that
24 the payment of three-and-a-half-million dollars in restitution
25 alone warrants a probationary sentence. I think it warrants

1 the Court's consideration.

2 But our point, as Your Honor already alluded to, is what
3 warrants a probationary sentence here is a combination of
4 acceptance of responsibility, the payment of the restitution,
5 and a life that is so incredibly well lived up until age 53.
6 And there's so much more, there's so much more that he can and
7 is prepared to do through Kearny Steel and NPS.

8 And I just want to run through, Judge, some of -- not all
9 of -- I know you've read them, I know you've seen the video,
10 but I just want to highlight for the Court a few of the letters
11 in support, because I think it's so extraordinary in so many
12 different ways.

13 So let me start with Mr. Verzaleno's family. And you
14 heard Karen allude to the fact that Nicholas Lembo is his
15 nephew; his sister, Jill's, son. He did not have a father.
16 Mr. Verzaleno was his father.

17 And Mr. Lembo spoke very articulately in his letter to the
18 fact that he didn't have cousins in Mike and Marc and Kayla, he
19 had siblings, and that's because of Mike and Karen.

20 And it's not, again, just that. It's also the fact that
21 when his sister had been abandoned in the way that she had, and
22 he had the ability to not only care for her son, but also help
23 care for her and set her future straight, he purchased, Judge,
24 80 percent of another company, and he gifted her 40 percent of
25 a company that was valued, at that point, at \$12 million. He

1 just bought that for his sister and his -- his third son to be
2 sure that if he was not there, they were going to be cared for.

3 You then also heard from his cousin, George Sheridan, who
4 was employed and reemployed at Kearny Steel, that's not what's
5 significant. What's significant is, when he was down on his
6 luck, addicted to drugs, had nowhere else to turn, it was his
7 cousin, Mike, and his uncle, Mike Senior, who lifted him up,
8 took him to AA meetings, and made sure that no matter what, he
9 had a place to work and he was receiving a check.

10 Same, Judge, is true in the community.

11 And there were letters which I didn't highlight in my
12 written submission because they were a smaller bore when he had
13 done so much, but even those give this incredible window into
14 Mike. And two struck me in particular.

15 There was -- I don't remember the gentleman's name, but he
16 was a boat captain who loved his Labrador retriever. And that
17 maybe resonated with me because I have a golden retriever who I
18 love. He lost his Labrador retriever. And Mike, who doesn't
19 know him all that well, called him up and said, "I want to
20 cover your veterinary bill."

21 Or his neighbor who they would go bike riding together a
22 few days a week, again, I don't remember his name. I think it
23 was Mr. Donohue, actually, now that I'm looking down at my
24 notes. Mr. Donohue and Mr. Verzaleno would go bike riding.
25 And Mr. Donohue lost his eye, so he couldn't go bike riding

1 anymore.

2 So Mike, on his own, went onto the internet or to bike
3 stores, researched the issue, bought him a tricycle so that the
4 two could continue riding together and Mr. Donohue could
5 continue to do something that he loved so very much.

6 Those are small issues which I didn't point out in the
7 letter because you have the Roon family, right? Who Mr. Roon's
8 wife was going through Stage IV pancreatic cancer, he paid
9 for -- I'll try not to get emotional, too -- paid for this --
10 his son's college. Invited the whole graduating class to his
11 backyard so Mrs. Roon could see her son enjoy the prom.

12 These are just remarkable feats. As Your Honor said
13 better than I could, the fact that people are willing to trust
14 in him in that way, confide in him in that way says all you
15 need to know about Mike Verزالeno.

16 And finally, Judge, I need to read into the record,
17 because I've never -- I wish I had the ability to write letters
18 like this on behalf of individuals in support of my client.
19 These are letters that we received over the course of several
20 months back in November and December. We simply said to Mike,
21 please have employees send letters. And we had no idea what we
22 were going to receive. And I had been to Kearny Steel. So
23 maybe I should -- many times. Maybe I should have.

24 Because if you go there, Judge, and I know we're in
25 Maryland and not New Jersey, and I don't know how much time you

1 spend in New Jersey, but Kearny Steel is right at a turnpike
2 overpass near the airport. Mr. Varghese and I happened to be
3 there together during the winter. It was snowing. Not
4 everything is in indoors. You're shuttling back and forth.
5 There's incredible noise. There are terrible smells. It may
6 have been the one time, Judge, I've joked before, that I was
7 actually happy to be an attorney, because there was so much
8 going on here, yet every employee I met had been there 20
9 years, 30 years, 40 years.

10 I was meeting people, and the letters refer to them, where
11 they were second- or third-generation Kearny Steel employees.
12 Their father had worked there and said it's a great place, so
13 "I'm working there, too."

14 And so I left thinking, well, what could be -- what is
15 keeping all of these people here with -- with the airplanes and
16 the noise and the smells and the cold and the ear plugs? Well,
17 it's Mike. And the letters spell that out in space so much so
18 that I thought Mike may have been writing some of these letters
19 secretly.

20 And then I spoke to -- and you heard from individuals,
21 many of whom are here, Mr. Jeter I saw. A number in the video
22 who were welling up crying in the same way I guess I am, I'm
23 guilty of it, too, about Mike Verzaleno. And that's, Judge,
24 because of what he's done for them. And I'm just going to read
25 into the record a few lines.

1 This is from Mr. Oliver's, I won't belabor it: "I never
2 thought I was going to have a chance at life until I met Mike
3 Junior."

4 From Mr. Jeter, who I just mentioned: "If it wasn't for
5 Mike, I would probably be dead on the streets. He taught me
6 that I really have hope in life. Every time, Judge, every time
7 I thought to do wrong, he," meaning Mike, "always came into my
8 mind, and I thought first of Mike before I could get myself in
9 trouble. I come faithfully" -- "I come to work faithfully,
10 just to see his face."

11 From Mr. Steplight: "Any time I've never needed Mike, he
12 has been there. I know I can always call Mike Senior and Mike
13 Junior at any time, and they will be there."

14 From Mr. Smith: "Anything I ask for, he will provide,
15 whether it is financial advice or marriage advice. I can
16 remember a time when Mike Junior helped loan me money for a
17 down payment on my house."

18 So the government was talking about cars before, and yes,
19 there were cars and medical bills, but here, he's helping one
20 of his employees realize the American dream in the most
21 fundamental way.

22 Mr. Cerilli talked about how he graduated from college.
23 And by the way, Mr. Cerilli was a caddy for Mr. Verzaleno who
24 was contemplating dropping out of school. Mr. Verzaleno said,
25 "No, continue. When you graduate, you have a place with me."

1 And not only did he have a place, but he took care of \$150,000
2 in Mr. Cerilli's college loans. He paid for his wedding
3 reception.

4 Mr. Cantone. Mr. Verzaleno walked into Mr. Cantone's
5 office one day and saw that something was troubling him. It
6 was he -- he was having difficulty affording his son's
7 education, the same way that the Roon family had. "I told them
8 my oldest boy is graduating college, but after a scholarship
9 and financial aid, it would be really hard to make the
10 payments. What happened next I will never forget. Michael
11 took care of the student loan and told me not to worry about
12 it."

13 From Mr. Perez: "Ain't a word to express how Mike is. I
14 can't imagine any big words to describe him."

15 And, Judge, just one more.

16 "I myself have only known Mr. Michael Verzaleno for seven
17 years, and it's like I've known him for my whole entire life.
18 I just don't look at Mr. Michael Verzaleno as the owner of the
19 company. He is more than that. As an example, he is a father
20 figure, a brother, a uncle, a son, a family man and a great
21 friend. I am so grateful that you," he's addressing Mike
22 directly, "helped me change my life for the best. I just want
23 to say that you have always" -- "that you always lead with
24 honesty and respect, and I'm proud to have learned this quality
25 from you, Mr. Michael Verzaleno. Thank you personally for

1 guiding me both professionally and personally." He signs it
2 "Your friend."

3 So, Judge, I can go on and on about this. But what is so
4 remarkable in all of these letters is, again, it's not just
5 about scholarships or paying for schools or homes or cars.
6 What is really incredible in all of this, and you heard it time
7 again in the letters, it's the Kearny Steel family. Sometimes,
8 with a capitalized F, you know, appropriately so, from my
9 perspective.

10 And you heard that on Easter, Mike and his two sons are at
11 the hospital bed of an employee. How they are driving
12 Mr. Oliver to medical appointments.

13 So, again, this is not -- I have been -- I've been
14 successful, and I'm going to share my success and don't bother
15 me. That's not why these people drove down -- all of the
16 people behind me drove down on a bus to be here in support.
17 It's because when they are at their darkest, when they are most
18 in need, when their son needs a call from Santa Claus, they are
19 talking to Mike Verزالeno.

20 And so, if that is not deserving of this Court's attention
21 and leniency, you know, Judge, I just don't know what is.

22 And I'll end with two points, and then I know Mike wants
23 to address the Court.

24 So the government spoke about deterrence, and I -- I was
25 once a prosecutor myself, and so I didn't appreciate fully what

1 it means to go through a case as a defendant until I was on the
2 other side of the table. And I -- I can assure you that
3 Mr. Verzaleno has been deterred and then some.

4 **THE COURT:** How about the general deterrence point?
5 I mean, that's really, I think, the government's strongest
6 argument, is if Mr. Verzaleno walks away without any time in
7 prison, what message does that send to the rest of a community
8 of opportunity to harm -- criminally harm others in this way?

9 **MR. VARTAN:** Well, I agree that that is their best
10 argument. I think there are two points on that.

11 Number one, Mr. Verzaleno, for all the reasons I said, is
12 uniquely situated. And 3553(a), as Your Honor well knows, is
13 not only focused on any one particular prong or element.

14 But secondarily, in all of this, there has been --
15 whatever sentence Your Honor imposes, even if it is
16 probationary, Mr. Verzaleno has been, and there's been --
17 either this has been advertised by the U.S. Attorney's Office,
18 there have been press releases, whatever the sentence is, there
19 is general deterrence out there in the form of the fact that
20 his business has been impacted, his reputation in this very
21 small community has been impacted. And there is no one,
22 certainly no one in their right mind, Judge, who would ever
23 think to engage in anything like this having seen what
24 Mr. Verzaleno -- if they really knew what Mr. Verzaleno has
25 been through, he and his family and his father, effectively his

1 surrogate mother in Susan Carrano, knew what he had been
2 through, believe me, no one would even think to cross a line.

3 The final point, Judge, that I want to raise with the
4 Court, is really a personal one in many ways. And you saw that
5 at various points, I tried to stay, you know, myself from --
6 from being too emotional. It's hard, because we have been
7 together at this point for several years. And in those years,
8 especially when you do what we all do, you get to know someone
9 as well as anyone possibly could. You're seeing them at their
10 lowest moment. You're seeing them, Judge, at the hardest times
11 in their life under the greatest stress.

12 You know, if you will recall, again, we were just a few
13 days away from trial, so I saw what it is for Mike Verzaleno to
14 be under stress. I saw what it is for him to be at his lowest
15 low. And his lowest low is still, Judge, so much incredibly
16 higher than the average person out there.

17 There was never a time where thoughts of his father and
18 Mrs. Carrano, his two codefendants, were not before him. It --
19 every single meeting, discussion, it was always Dad and Sue,
20 never him. There was never a time that he missed a family
21 event to prep with me for trial, have a conversation about the
22 case. His family always came first.

23 So I feel that not only are these 71 letters interesting
24 to read and important to read, but they are my lived experience
25 with Mike Verzaleno. He's every bit what all of those

1 individuals say in those 71 letters, and probably the 71 more
2 that we could have gotten had we had more time.

3 So this has been, you know, a long road; a long road for
4 Mike; a long road for Karen; for his son, Mike, Marc, Kayla,
5 who are all here in the courtroom.

6 **THE COURT:** They are here?

7 **MR. VARTAN:** They are all here today.

8 In some ways, it's the only good that's come of this, the
9 only good. Because I don't know what they, you know, knew, in
10 the case of Karen, about their husband, or Mike and Marc and
11 Kayla in the case of their father. I suspect that they knew
12 the impact that he had had on so many lives, but if they didn't
13 know, they surely know now. They surely do.

14 And we, Judge, know that in a few moments, this is all
15 going to be in your hands. But what I would leave you with is
16 something that stuck with me and Your Honor has already alluded
17 to. All of this time, these past seven years, even before,
18 there's never been a time when Mike was looking to advertise
19 Mike. Never been a time when he was donating money or helping
20 with tuition or helping with a home or a car that he was
21 looking to advertise what he had done in any way. You know, I
22 liken it to him -- I call him a quiet hero in many ways.
23 There's never a time when he's looking for admiration or
24 adulation or anything.

25 Your Honor said it's messy, I think is the term that you

1 used. It is. It is. I wish I -- I truly wish we weren't here
2 today. But Judge, there is nothing messy about Mike
3 Verzaleno's life, there's nothing messy about all that he's
4 done and, Judge, all the good left for him to do.

5 So I would echo what Mr. Oliver and some of the employees
6 at Kearny Steel and NPS has said, has said to the Court, which
7 is they need him. There aren't that many Mike Verzalenos in
8 New Jersey.

9 And I think the appropriate sentence here is a
10 probationary one to allow him, Judge, to return to the people
11 who need him most, his real family and his Kearny Steel family.

12 So I thank you.

13 **THE COURT:** Thank you.

14 **MR. VARTAN:** Mike?

15 **THE COURT:** Before Mr. Verzaleno has a chance to
16 speak, let me just make sure the government doesn't have
17 anything else, because I do believe it's important for
18 Mr. Verzaleno to hear everything before he -- and for the
19 defense to hear everything before he addresses the Court. So
20 if they have nothing else, then I'll hear from him.

21 **MR. VARTAN:** Very good. Thank you, Judge.

22 **THE COURT:** Government, anything else?

23 **MR. WENNER:** A few quick points, Your Honor.

24 **THE COURT:** Okay.

25 **MR. WENNER:** Your Honor, I think in the defense's

1 statements and in the memo, throughout this case, really,
2 there's been the constant comparison with the other companies
3 that stole from C and A, and there's been this constant
4 comparison with the point that the money stole was less, that
5 there were legitimate funds -- legitimate sales. And I do
6 think -- I understand why they make that point. I understand
7 why Your Honor should take that into account.

8 But I would ask that if this were just the Verzalenos'
9 fraud, if this were just the \$3.5 million, would the point that
10 they could have stole 20 be as impactful?

11 **THE COURT:** No. But part of it is in response to
12 your memorandum. I mean, in fairness, like, that memorandum
13 was sharp. It was sharp about -- I mean, something I didn't
14 bring up, but I got to tell you really stuck in my crawl, is,
15 like, I think there was even a suggestion that Mr. Verzaleno
16 may have been making up how much wine he drinks. I don't know
17 who wrote that. But I have to tell you, when you're under the
18 gun of a federal indictment, you'll probably up your wine
19 content, and it wasn't good form to suggest that somehow this
20 was made up, or this was all greed. It was a ten-page
21 memorandum that made a point to me.

22 So I think it was -- in fairness, it's in response to
23 this, you know, Mr. Verzaleno is all about greed and all about
24 sticking it to C and A. And so, of course, the response is
25 going to be, well, the person who was sticking it to C and A

1 were the insiders who totally were responsible for \$29 million,
2 and Mr. Verzaleno, yes, very, very serious. But comparatively,
3 because I have to avoid unwarranted disparity, I have to keep
4 an eye on sentencing people in a similar way. We've all heard
5 about Mr. Urcioli, it was part of your agreement with the
6 defense.

7 So I'm not sure that's -- like, that exercise of saying,
8 okay, well, what if it were just 3.5 million? Just. Or just
9 the Verzalenos, would that matter? Because it isn't. I mean,
10 it's just not the facts before me. And I just bristle at this
11 notion that, you know, the defense can't stand up and say,
12 well, in response to the way the government's handled the case,
13 we've got something to say about it.

14 **MR. WENNER:** Of course, Your Honor. And I'm not
15 saying the defense can't make that argument, and I understand
16 why they are making it, I'm just simply saying that the
17 \$3.5 million is still an impactful amount --

18 **THE COURT:** Absolutely.

19 **MR. WENNER:** -- that harmed C and A.

20 **THE COURT:** Absolutely.

21 **MR. WENNER:** And I just wanted to put that point on
22 the record.

23 **THE COURT:** And it's impactful -- I mean, it's not
24 the whole story, so let the record be clear, but it is
25 impactful that all of the companies and individuals that prayed

1 on C and A, there's really only one company who has tried to
2 make it as right as you can at this point, right? I mean, you
3 can't -- you can't undo the clock and do what you suggest would
4 have been Plan A, which is blow the whistle on this guy, right?
5 That would have been the absolute A-plus response.

6 But next in line is, "I did wrong, I committed a crime,
7 this is what I owe. And I'm going to make it right right now."
8 I mean, no other company has come close.

9 **MR. WENNER:** That's correct, Your Honor. On that
10 point, if I may grab something from the desk?

11 **THE COURT:** Yeah.

12 **MR. WENNER:** And, again, I do think -- I'm not saying
13 Your Honor shouldn't take the 3.5 million into account that
14 they have paid.

15 **THE COURT:** Right.

16 **MR. WENNER:** But I think some of the cases that the
17 defense cites in their memorandum illustrate how much of a
18 weight, Your Honor --

19 **THE COURT:** And I'm not giving it much.

20 **MR. WENNER:** Okay.

21 **THE COURT:** I'm really not. I'm really not.

22 If the 71 individuals who tell a life story didn't tell
23 that life story, the restitution payment is what you're
24 supposed to do when you have the means. You don't get a gold
25 star for doing what you're supposed to do.

1 But what's remarkable to me, in the need to avoid
2 unwarranted disparities, how few do what they are supposed to
3 do.

4 **MR. WENNER:** I understand, Your Honor.

5 **THE COURT:** That's, to me, very significant. I
6 almost never see individuals do what they are supposed to do,
7 and that's make the victim whole.

8 **MR. WENNER:** I understand the point, Your Honor.

9 Perhaps I would just contrast this case with the
10 *Oligmueller* case that the defense cites on Page 8 of their
11 memorandum, that's out of the Eighth Circuit. I would just
12 note that in that case, Your Honor, the defendant there, he was
13 indicted for making a false statement to a bank for lying
14 about -- he was a rancher. He lied about the number of cattle
15 he had to get a loan.

16 **THE COURT:** Okay.

17 **MR. WENNER:** A year before he was indicted, he
18 started making restitution. He sold his house, he deducted
19 half of his monthly Social Security check.

20 **THE COURT:** But did he have an active dispute with
21 the government as to what that dollar amount would be? I mean,
22 again, you charged it as 9 million, or north of 9 million.

23 **MR. WENNER:** That's correct.

24 **THE COURT:** You came to 3.5 million. How is one
25 supposed to, pending a trial, right, where the spread is that

1 big, start paying early restitution?

2 **MR. WENNER:** Well, I will say, Your Honor, the
3 argument was, until very late in the stage, was not how much,
4 it was whether it happened at all. So we never got to the
5 discussion of we would say this amount of fraud occurred, and
6 the government was disagreeing. It wasn't until very, very
7 late in the stage that it was a question of what was the amount
8 at issue here.

9 **THE COURT:** But the point is that the government is
10 saying we charged it, we can prove it, nine-and-a-half-million
11 dollars, right?

12 And if the spread is a \$6 million spread, I mean, the
13 defense has to say nothing more than prove it, that's --

14 **MR. WENNER:** That's correct.

15 **THE COURT:** And so I just -- again, I just don't know
16 how one analogizes this case to the one you're talking about
17 when there obviously was some issue with the ultimate
18 restitution or the ultimate loss caused by Kearny and the three
19 defendants before me. I mean, a big issue.

20 **MR. WENNER:** I understand the point, Your Honor. I
21 would just conclude that in that particular case, where there
22 was half of the Social Security deducted, sale of the house or
23 sale of all of the assets of the farm, the reduction was one
24 offense level. So I think that just speaks into how much
25 weight.

1 But, Your Honor, just to conclude, I turn back to general
2 deterrence here. You know, now we have a case where there are
3 multiple defendants, and we have a situation in which one
4 particular victim was defrauded of tens of millions of dollars,
5 millions of dollars from these particular defendants, and we
6 have one sentenced individual who received a probationary
7 sentence, and now we have three additional defendants here
8 asking for probationary sentences.

9 **THE COURT:** Well -- but we also have another
10 individual who received 43 months.

11 **MR. WENNER:** That's correct.

12 **THE COURT:** And he was -- he was at ground zero.

13 **MR. WENNER:** Yes, yes.

14 **THE COURT:** So there's that.

15 **MR. WENNER:** That is correct, Your Honor. I'm just
16 reviewing the full scape of the land. But that is a fair
17 point, Your Honor.

18 So I would just ask that the Court take that into account
19 about what type of message other corporations, not only in the
20 drum business, but elsewhere, that deal with procurement and
21 daily billing, what kind of message they receive when tens of
22 millions of dollars, a multi-year fraud scheme is on the table,
23 and the possibility of jail time is a question for these
24 defendants.

25 So unless Your Honor has further questions, we would rest

1 on our briefs and previous statements.

2 **THE COURT:** Okay. Thank you.

3 All right. Okay. Mr. Verzaleno, whenever you're ready.

4 **THE DEFENDANT:** Good afternoon, Your Honor.

5 **THE COURT:** Good afternoon.

6 **THE DEFENDANT:** State my name?

7 **THE COURT:** Sure.

8 **THE DEFENDANT:** Okay. I'm Michael Verzaleno.

9 Today is hard. When I look behind me, and I see a
10 courtroom packed with family, friends and coworkers, I know I
11 let so many down. I lived my entire life honorably. I've
12 never been in any sort of trouble.

13 My wife, Karen, and I have been married for close to 30
14 years. Together we have three incredible children who we could
15 not be prouder of. I have a 75-year-old business that was
16 handed down to me from my father, whose father handed it down
17 to him. One day, I will hand it to my boys.

18 I have poured every ounce of myself into the business for
19 the past 30 years. And because of that, our business has
20 grown. Between Kearny Steel Container and National Packaging
21 Services, I employ over 200 people. Some of them are here
22 today, and I thank them for coming to support me.

23 As you heard from my wife, Governor McGreevey, and some of
24 my employees themselves, I have worked to build a work family.
25 So many of my employees have been with me 20 years, 30 years,

1 and 40 years. So many of my employees were down on their luck,
2 were much worse when they came to me for a job.

3 I made it my mission to give them a career, a second
4 chance, a full life. If there is one bit of good that came out
5 of this, it was learning the impact I have had on so many.
6 Reading the letters that were submitted on my behalf to the
7 Court, and watching the video, I cried. There were tears of
8 joy for seeing a life well lived, and there were tears of
9 sorrow for a terrible, unnecessary mistake. I have it all.

10 I didn't need to involve myself with Gene DiNoto. I
11 didn't need to give in to his pressure, but I did. I let my
12 family down, and I let my work family down.

13 But I've committed myself to fixing my terrible mistake.
14 I paid back what I helped Gene DiNoto take from Citrus and
15 Allied and to Mr. Pisano.

16 Let me say clearly and plainly, I'm sorry. I hope one
17 day, I regain your trust and we can do business together.

18 I recommitted myself to my employees. To those with me
19 here today, hear me when I say, I'll never let you down again.
20 And you'll always have a home at Kearny Steel Container and
21 National Packaging Services. You are my family.

22 And to Karen, Michael, Marc and Kayla, I'm without words.
23 I let you down, but you never let me down. You're my greatest
24 joy, my greatest pride, and my greatest love. Thank you for
25 never leaving my side.

1 Your Honor, I ask that you only judge me on my entire life
2 and not just my relationship with Gene DiNoto. If you give me
3 a second chance, I will work every day to make the most of it.

4 Thank you, Your Honor.

5 **THE COURT:** Thank you.

6 All right. Everyone, we have been going for two hours. I
7 would like to take a brief break, and then I'll come out and
8 announce my sentence. So let's be back here at 1:15.

9 **DEPUTY CLERK:** All rise. This Honorable Court now
10 stands in recess.

11 (Recess taken from 1:05 p.m. to 1:19 p.m.)

12 (Conference on the sealed record.)

13 (It is the policy of this court that every guilty plea and
14 sentencing proceeding include a bench conference concerning
15 whether the defendant is or is not cooperating.)

16 (The following was held in open court:)

17 **DEPUTY CLERK:** All rise. This Honorable Court now
18 resumes in session.

19 **THE COURT:** All right, everyone. You can have a
20 seat.

21 Okay. So if anyone has ever been before me for
22 sentencing, you know it can be a long and windy road. I'm
23 going to try to first announce what the sentence is and then
24 give you what my reasoning is.

25 Give me one second. Okay.

1 So it's based on, obviously, all the evidence and all the
2 arguments that I've heard, that as to Count One for you,
3 Mr. Verzaleno, I'm going to impose a sentence of time served
4 followed by three years of supervised release. And in addition
5 to the standard and mandatory conditions of supervised release,
6 perhaps the most important in this regard, is that you serve 18
7 months on home confinement or electronic monitoring at your own
8 expense.

9 You will have release for work, legal, medical, family
10 obligations, and it will be at the discretion of Probation. It
11 will also be at the discretion of Probation how you will be
12 monitored for those 18 months.

13 In addition, there will be a -- I'm going to impose the
14 high end of the guideline fine, which is \$95,000. That is to
15 be payable within 30 days from today.

16 And the restitution amount of 3.5 million, plus the
17 interest earned, will be due and payable immediately, and that
18 will just, as I understand it, go from our registry to the
19 victim.

20 Ms. Cameron, from your perspective, is there anything else
21 that I need to say with regard to the electronic monitoring as
22 a special condition?

23 **PROBATION OFFICER:** Your Honor, not that I'm aware
24 of. We will have to request that from New Jersey, but I
25 believe with the defendant's means, we can get the technology

1 accommodated from the Probation office.

2 **THE COURT:** Okay. All right. Very good. And then
3 in terms of additional recommended conditions of supervision, I
4 do want you evaluated for substance abuse testing and
5 treatment. We'll see what the evaluation produces. And if
6 Probation and the experts that they use determine that you are
7 in need of treatment, that you are to participate in a
8 substance abuse treatment program and follow the rules and
9 regulations of that program. And the Probation office will
10 supervise your participation in it.

11 And I put it that way just because I do understand that
12 the basis for it is situational, and that it really -- I want
13 to leave it to the experts to determine whether you could
14 benefit from some of that treatment.

15 So here's why this is where I am:

16 3553(a) says I do have to take into account the
17 guidelines, and I do take them into account. And your advisory
18 guideline range certainly does, if that were all I were looking
19 at, would warrant prison. But the law says I must look at much
20 more. I have to look at not only the seriousness of this
21 offense, the need to promote respect for the law and protect
22 the public, but I have to consider you, Mr. Verzaleno, your
23 history, circumstances and characteristics. It's all evidence.
24 And it's all equally before me, and I have to balance it, which
25 is probably the hardest thing judges have to do.

1 On the one hand, I do recognize that Citrus and Allied has
2 been fleeced. They have been fleeced for over a decade. Their
3 insiders, in my view, don't compare to what the outsiders have
4 done in terms of just the level of brazenness and of
5 persistence and taking for themselves.

6 When I think about Mr. DiNoto and Mr. Kleinman and others,
7 without them this conspiracy could not have happened,
8 inflicting on Citrus and Allied \$29 million of loss, I don't
9 see it as a real risk that my sentence to Mr. Verzaleno is
10 going to really have much impact on the ultimate sentence for
11 Mr. DiNoto, because Mr. DiNoto is the one, from all the
12 evidence that I see, who but for -- and Mr. Kleinman, but for
13 their greed going back 15, 16 years, maybe even further, none
14 of us would be here.

15 But nonetheless, your participation in this,
16 Mr. Verzaleno, you know was very, very serious.
17 Three-and-a-half-million dollars over the years in which you
18 participated with Mr. DiNoto, the government is absolutely
19 right, you could have avoided by simply saying, "Not going to
20 do it, I don't care why you want to do it, don't care who you
21 are, I'm not compromising my principles." And for someone of
22 your caliber, who has lead by example for so many other people,
23 it is a bit surprising but not all together unheard of.

24 So when I think of the seriousness of your participation
25 in this offense, if that were, again, the only thing I were

1 looking at, maybe I would be agreeing with the government, and
2 that a lengthy period of incarceration is warranted.

3 However, when I look at you and all that you have done in
4 this world and what you will continue to do, and I credit it,
5 that you will continue to do it because you've done it, you
6 know, like what we've said, when no one else is looking, you've
7 just done it because it's the right thing to do, the best that
8 I can do for the community, for Newark and for all the people
9 with whom you work, and I say that very purposely, you are an
10 uncommon boss in that you are -- you lead in the service of
11 others. That's how you lead. You lead by serving others.

12 And the best that I can do for all the people in this room
13 who have benefited by you is to keep you home. But it is not a
14 cakewalk to be on supervised release. And anyone who thinks
15 just because have you a nice house, supervised release is going
16 to be a cakewalk is really misguided and doesn't understand how
17 supervision and the special condition can visit significant
18 daily punishment and corrective measures. And here's how.

19 You're going to wake up every day with a box on your
20 ankle. You're going to ask permission to do things that you
21 hadn't given a second thought about because you're a grown man
22 who takes responsibility, right? And now you're going to have
23 to ask permission for things like can I go to the doctor? Can
24 I go to handle my banking? Can I work these hours?

25 Speaking of, your daily -- your hours are long; is that

1 right?

2 **THE DEFENDANT:** Yes.

3 **THE COURT:** Tell me what your hours currently are.

4 **THE DEFENDANT:** I leave my house at 2:30 a.m. to go
5 to work.

6 **THE COURT:** And what time do you get home?

7 **THE DEFENDANT:** Typically about 3:00.

8 **THE COURT:** Okay. So you work a 12-hour day.

9 You're going to have to present to Probation your hours.

10 And if they don't approve them, then you're not going to be
11 able to work those hours. You're going to have to do it all
12 with less time. That's a significant punishment to do it for a
13 year and a half.

14 But what I find to be overly punitive to your community is
15 to remove you from the community. I think you are best --
16 justice is best served if you are home serving your punishment
17 alongside everybody else who you, in your own words, have let
18 down so that they can see you lead by service and by example.

19 Again, I meant what I said. I haven't seen an individual
20 do more for a community that folks usually forget. And those
21 of you who have spoken, who have committed crimes, and then you
22 have paid your service, you've paid your debt, and then you
23 come home and nobody wants to give you a chance, that's real.
24 And you come home, you don't know how to work the cell phone,
25 you don't know where to get your ID, you don't know where to

1 get your drug treatment, and you come home and nobody gives you
2 bupkis, and you got to figure it out. Your family is
3 wondering, you know, why haven't you gotten your act together,
4 you're home 30 days? And Mr. Verzaleno is the one that gives
5 you a chance, and maybe a second, and maybe a third, that's an
6 uncommon occurrence. It's unfortunate that it's as uncommon as
7 it is, because frankly, if you want to reduce deterrence,
8 Mr. Verzaleno, your model is proven to reduce deterrence.

9 And you've been doing that for years when no one is
10 talking about it and know it's not popular.

11 A decade, a decade and a half ago, Mr. Oliver, did you say
12 16 years ago?

13 **ABDUL OLIVER:** Yes.

14 **THE COURT:** Okay. No one was talking about reentry.
15 No one was talking about rehabilitation, and how the community
16 can help with this. You were doing it.

17 **ABDUL OLIVER:** Yes.

18 **THE COURT:** And I take that as a sign of and as
19 evidence of your character.

20 Now, let the record be clear, you do not get a gold star.
21 You do not get, like, a pass just because you've helped others
22 who have committed crimes like you. But you do, as you asked,
23 you get consideration for it.

24 There's just so many people who one might say you have
25 just thrown money at the problem, but that's not true, because

1 each and every person has not only talked about what you've
2 paid for but what you have done for them and how considerate
3 you have been to their own particular plight. In my book, that
4 counts for much.

5 So overall, when I balance the seriousness of the offense
6 and the seriousness of the sanction that you will receive,
7 because 18 months' home confinement, home detention with the
8 box is no joke, based on all the evidence, I believe that that
9 is the sufficient but not greater than necessary sentence.

10 Any questions about the sentence I've imposed?

11 Government?

12 **MR. WENNER:** None from the government, Your Honor.

13 **THE COURT:** Defense?

14 **MR. VARTAN:** No, Your Honor.

15 **THE COURT:** Okay. So Mr. Ulander has -- thank you.

16 So Mr. Ulander is the one that keeps me straight when I go
17 curvey.

18 With respect to the condition of home detention, I want it
19 to be home detention. And the reason why it has to be clear is
20 so Probation has maximum flexibility in how it imposes home
21 detention both in technology and the way in which Mr. Verzaleno
22 will have to get permission for work, medical, legal and other
23 periods of release from home detention. That's number one.

24 Number two, I did omit the \$100 special assessment. If it
25 hasn't been paid already, it is due and payable during the

1 course of supervision.

2 The restitution amount is -- or will be joint and several
3 with Mr. Verzaleno, Sr., and Ms. Carrano.

4 And, Mr. Ulander, anything else? Did I miss anything?

5 **DEPUTY CLERK:** Order of forfeiture.

6 **THE COURT:** And the order of forfeiture I will sign.
7 This is a preliminary order of forfeiture, which includes a
8 money judgment of \$1 million.

9 Let me ask the parties, given that restitution has been
10 fully satisfied, does that obviate the need for this order of
11 forfeiture?

12 **MR. WENNER:** That's not the government's position,
13 Your Honor.

14 **THE COURT:** Okay. So I'm going to sign this, but is
15 it -- usually it's the government's position that in the event
16 monies are forfeited, they would go to pay toward restitution.

17 **MR. WENNER:** That is often the case. But, Your
18 Honor, I believe, not -- not always the case here. And the
19 government's position would be that the restitution and the
20 forfeiture are two different requirements under the relevant
21 laws and rules. The restitution going to the victim, but the
22 forfeiture being the forfeiture of the money that the
23 defendant, in particular, got on their own. And the
24 government's position is that these are two separate --

25 **THE COURT:** Oh, no, I know they are. As a matter of

1 law, I'm just asking whether it's going -- you're going to take
2 the consistent position, which you've taken in many other
3 cases, which is if you -- and this is why I'm asking it. The
4 position you've taken is if you receive a certain dollar amount
5 in forfeiture, you apply for that money to be put toward
6 restitution.

7 **MR. WENNER:** I see, Your Honor.

8 **THE COURT:** Are you going to -- I understand that
9 restitution has already been satisfied, which is why I'm sort
10 of asking the question, are you still going to be making that
11 request, that forfeiture -- the monies you received in
12 forfeiture be put toward restitution?

13 **MR. WENNER:** Court's indulgence?

14 **THE COURT:** Sure.

15 **MR. WENNER:** Thank you for the Court's indulgences,
16 Your Honor.

17 The ultimate determination of how the forfeiture is
18 applied is made by the group at main justice that handles the
19 forfeiture proceedings of a particular case.

20 We're happy to -- and the -- our office does not usually
21 make that representation, so we're happy to coordinate and
22 communicate that with the forfeiture folks at main justice
23 about the usual position that the government takes in these
24 cases. But they are the individuals who make that ultimate
25 decision, Your Honor.

1 **THE COURT:** Okay. All right. Defense, any issue
2 with my signing? I mean, you agreed upon this million-dollar
3 forfeiture order, so I'm assuming there's not going to be an
4 issue with my signing it, and you will work out the details
5 with the government?

6 **MR. VARTAN:** We will.

7 **THE COURT:** Okay. All right. Then I'll go ahead and
8 sign that.

9 Okay. Anything else before I advise Mr. Verzaleno of his
10 rights to appeal?

11 **MR. WENNER:** Your Honor, just to dismiss the
12 remaining open counts.

13 **THE COURT:** Thank you.

14 **MR. WENNER:** Those are Counts Two through Eighteen in
15 the indictment.

16 **THE COURT:** Okay. All right. And I grant that. I
17 find that reasonable under Rule 11(c)(1)(A).

18 Anything else from the government before I --

19 **MR. WENNER:** No, Your Honor.

20 **THE COURT:** Mr. Verzaleno, I don't recall whether
21 you've given up your right to appeal my sentence, so I advise
22 you that you should speak with your counsel about it if you're
23 dissatisfied with the sentence. You must note an appeal within
24 14 days from today.

25 And with that, I do personally wish you the best of luck.

THE DEFENDANT: Thank you, Your Honor.

THE COURT: All right. Thank you all. We'll take a brief break and then we'll start Mr. Verzaleno, Sr.'s sentence.

DEPUTY CLERK: All rise. This Honorable Court now stands in recess.

CERTIFICATE OF OFFICIAL REPORTER

I, Paula J. Leeper, Federal Official Court Reporter, in and for the United States District Court for the District of Maryland, do hereby certify, pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 753, that the foregoing is a true and correct transcript of the stenographically-reported proceedings held in the above-entitled matter and the transcript page format is in conformance with the regulations of the Judicial Conference of the United States.

Dated this 3rd day of April, 2025.

/S/ Paula J. Leeper

Paula J. Leeper, RPR, CRR
Federal Official Reporter

<p>ABDUL OLIVER: [5] 55/24 56/2 56/10 80/13 80/17 DEPUTY CLERK: [6] 55/13 56/1 56/10 80/13 80/17 92/5 95/4 JAMES McGREEVEY: [9] 51/12 51/15 51/21 52/3 52/5 52/13 55/3 55/14 55/17 KAREN VERZALENO: [3] 49/13 49/18 49/21 MR. VARGHESE: [1] 4/1 MR. VARTAN: [37] 3/23 5/20 5/23 6/21 7/13 8/4 8/12 8/18 9/4 9/14 9/16 10/19 14/6 14/13 14/16 14/18 15/2 15/11 15/20 16/6 16/9 17/9 49/7 51/8 55/20 57/17 58/5 58/7 61/20 62/25 63/19 72/9 74/7 75/14 75/21 91/14 94/6 MR. WENNER: [97] MS. WERNICK: [1] 4/3 PROBATION OFFICER: [1] 85/23 RICHARD C. PISANO, JR.: [5] 46/25 47/2 47/6 47/9 47/12 THE COURT: [173] THE DEFENDANT: [12] 5/4 5/11 5/15 5/17 18/6 82/4 82/6 82/8 89/2 89/4 89/7 95/1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER ON TELEPHONE: [1] 11/11</p> <p>\$</p> <p>\$1 [2] 12/2 92/8 \$1 million [2] 12/2 92/8 \$10 [1] 63/5 \$10 million [1] 63/5 \$100 [1] 91/24 \$12 [1] 65/25 \$12 million [1] 65/25 \$15,000 [2] 24/6 35/18 \$150,000 [1] 70/1 \$20 [5] 43/13 63/15 64/3 64/4 64/13 \$20 million [5] 43/13 63/15 64/3 64/4 64/13 \$29 [3] 31/6 77/1 87/8 \$29 million [3] 31/6 77/1 87/8 \$3.5 [11] 10/5 10/16 15/13 16/18 17/5 19/4 34/4 41/8 45/23 76/9 77/17 \$3.5 million [11] 10/5 10/16 15/13 16/18 17/5 19/4 34/4 41/8 45/23 76/9 77/17 \$30 [3] 8/10 9/18 63/13 \$30 million [3] 8/10 9/18 63/13 \$30,000 [1] 24/7 \$500,000 [1] 62/11 \$6 [2] 63/16 80/12 \$6 million [1] 63/16 \$65 [1] 62/7 \$65 million [1] 62/7 \$9.8 [1] 41/25 \$9.8 million [1] 41/25 \$9.9 [1] 62/19 \$9.9 million [1] 62/19 \$95,000 [1] 85/14</p> <p>/</p> <p>/s [1] 96/15</p> <p>0</p> <p>02109 [1] 2/7 07068 [1] 2/4</p> <p>1</p> <p>10 [1] 39/22 10,000 [1] 35/18 105 [2] 2/3 36/18 10th [1] 30/2 11 [2] 10/2 94/17 11:00 [1] 1/11 12-hour [1] 89/8 125 [1] 48/3 13 [1] 29/6 14 [2] 29/6 94/24 15 [1] 87/13 16 [4] 6/1 6/8 87/13 90/12 18 [4] 6/1 85/6 85/12 91/7 1933 [1] 47/16 1:05 [1] 84/11 1:15 [1] 84/8 1:19 [1] 84/11 1:23-00323-PX-1 [1] 1/6</p> <p>2</p> <p>20 [4] 48/6 68/8 76/10 82/25 200 [1] 82/21 2007 [1] 59/20 2011 [1] 20/12 2013 [1] 20/5 2015 [3] 36/17 36/19 36/20 2025 [2] 1/11 96/12 20770 [1] 1/17 2107 [1] 2/4 22-cr-29 [1] 43/20 24 [1] 1/11 25,000 [1] 52/16 27 [1] 18/15 28 [1] 96/6 29 [1] 43/20 29 million [2] 13/16 13/25 2:30 a.m [1] 89/4</p> <p>3</p> <p>3.5 million [7] 12/17 13/11 14/2 77/8 78/13 79/24 85/16 30 [8] 9/18 48/6 68/9 82/13 82/19 82/25 85/15 90/4 30 million [1] 9/11 323 [1] 3/12 3553 [5] 18/19 60/21 60/22 72/12 86/16 3:00 [1] 89/7 3rd [1] 96/12</p>

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